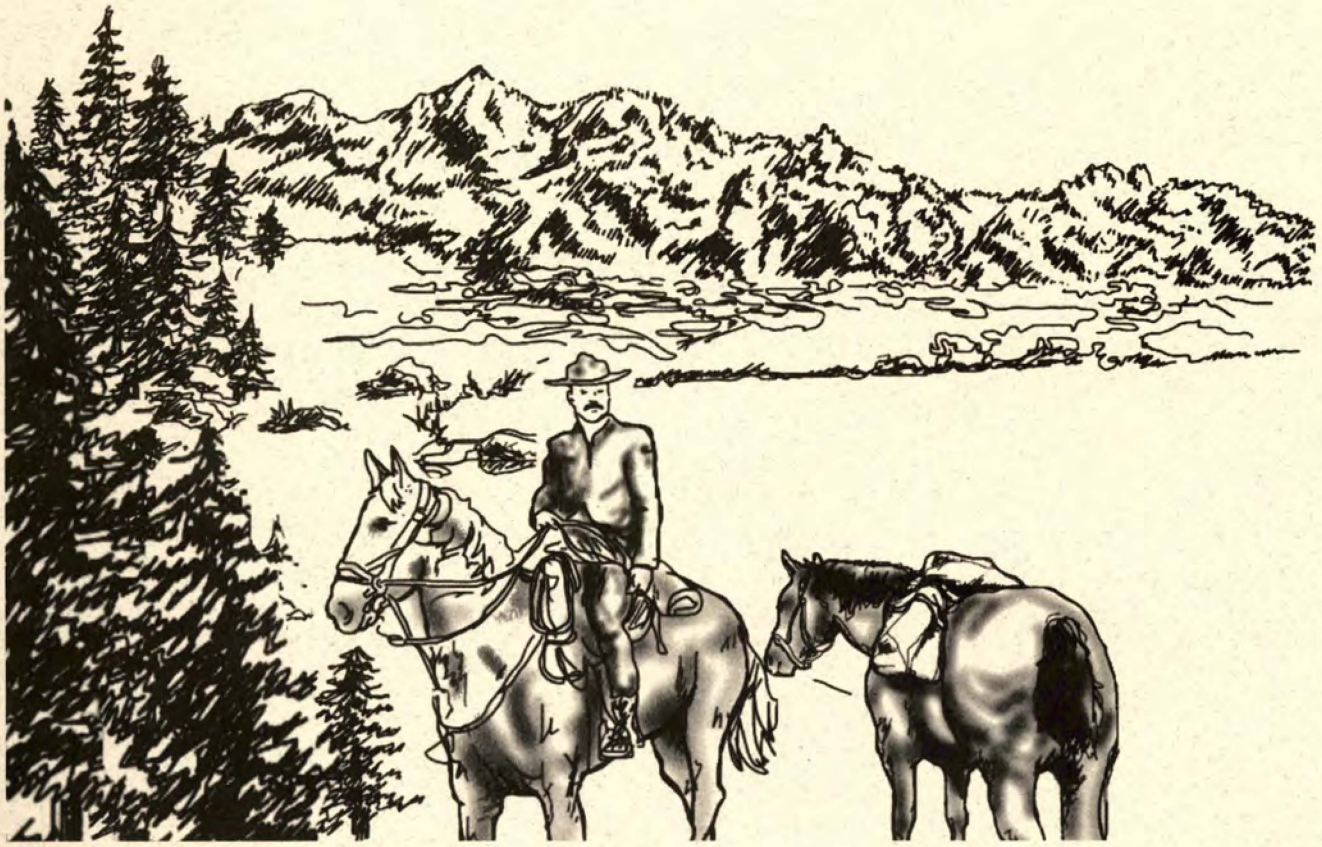
SIERRA CENTENNIAL



100 YEARS OF PIONEERING ON THE SIERRA NATIONAL FOREST

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF
AGRICULTURE

PREPARED BY:
FOREST SERVICE

PACIFIC
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SIERRA CENTENNIAL

One Hundred Years of Pioneering On the Sierra National Forest

By Gene Rose

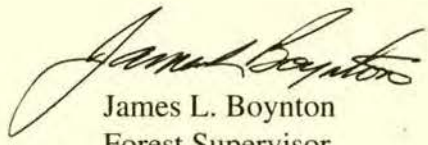
Sierra National Forest
1600 Tollhouse Ave.
Clovis, CA 93611

1993

Foreword

Funding for this project was provided by the Presidential Recreation Initiative, "America's Great Outdoors." The focus of this initiative is to provide educational and interpretive opportunities about the National Forests.

As a special project in this year of the Centennial Anniversary of the Sierra National Forest, Gene Rose, author of this publication, was asked to bring together the past 100 years of events and people that have shaped and molded this Forest and agency into what it is today. Mr. Rose was given just five months to complete this project and without his dedication, diligence and energy, this history about the men and women of this Forest, would not have been told. Our sincerest thanks to him.



James L. Boynton
Forest Supervisor

Sierra Centennial

Introduction

On the western slope of California's mighty Sierra Nevada -close to the geographical center of the Golden State - the 1.3 million acre Sierra National Forest stands as one of the pioneering efforts of the American conservation and forestry movement.

While the roots of the area as a national forest are comparatively short, the mountain area has a vast and varied history, both human and natural. Originally the land now embraced by the forest was home to the native American Indians; here for thousands of years, the Miwok, Monos, Yokuts and other tribes lived in harmony with the land. But with the discovery of gold in 1848, thousands of newcomers swarmed over the foothills. Miners, lumbermen, stockmen and settlers flocked to the mountains, each seeking his own fortune and each taking from the earth's bountiful resources.

Around the same time, similar abuses and depredations were occurring in other forest areas across the country and at an alarming rate. Calls for reforms began echoing across the land. Something needed to be done to stem the abuses. At nearby Yosemite those calls gave rise to the Yosemite state grant in 1864 and the nation's first effort toward wildland preservation. Similar efforts at the federal level a few years later resulted in Yellowstone, Yosemite, Sequoia and General Grant becoming national parks.

But something else was needed between outright preservation and the responsible use of millions of acres of public land. In 1891 a gigantic experiment in utilitarian conservation was launched when President Benjamin Harrison signed legislation permitting the creation of a system of forest reserves. When first established in 1893, the Sierra Forest Reserve emerged as the sixth and largest reserve in the nation, covering sections of half a dozen California counties. Its roughly defined boundaries included more than four million acres of some of the wildest and still unmapped mountain regions of the nation, extending from the foothills all the way across the towering range to the Owens Valley.

Onto this vast landscape came a handful of courageous but naive men who were to begin a pioneering effort to protect the forest from fire, over-grazing and indiscriminate logging. Shackled from the onset by congressional indifference, political expediency and a lack of knowledge of the art and science of forestry, the experiment languished. For years the reserve stumbled along, struggling in the wilderness of ignorance and apathy. Finally in 1905, the reserve system gave way to the Forest Service, ushering in new enlightenment and direction.

In the past 100 years the Sierra National Forest has undergone a continuing metamorphosis, changing in size, administration and mission. From its peak acreage of over 6 million acres in 1908, the Sierra has been divided and divided again and again, contributing substantially to the Sequoia, Stanislaus, Inyo and the old Mono National Forest; Kings Canyon National Park and Devils Postpile National Monument; and adding to the size and stature of both Yosemite and Sequoia National Parks.

The Sierra National Forest boasts a rich and colorful history. By any measure the forest has been a pioneering effort in resource and land management. As such, it has been no stranger to change or controversy. Some may believe that the Forest Ser-

vice experienced little controversy until the environmental movement of the 1960s came along; such is not the case. The early reserves were born in conflict, reaching back to days when sheepmen and cattlemen fought "grass wars" over the lush mountain meadows. The arrival of the Forest Service did little to still the controversy.

While the stockmen no longer battle for the mountain meadows, their successors still find a large amount of forage on the slopes of the Sierra. Every year the forest produces the equivalent of about 37,000 animal months of range forage, not counting the stock that private individuals and commercial packers take to the forest. In an average year, the Sierra watershed yields more than 3 million acre feet of water to San Joaquin Valley communities and agricultural interests. At the same time, the Sierra is one of the most powerful forests in the nation; with 18 hydroelectric plants generating electrical power.

In the past decade the Forest Service has made major shifts in its management policies to adjust to new concerns and conditions. The great experiment of the 1890s has moved to accommodate the realities of the 1990s. One of the major changes has been toward ecosystem management - the sustainability of all components and members of the forest community. This change has introduced profound changes. For instance, the timber harvest has shrunk to about half of its historical levels. These reductions and other changes have not been painless, and only future events will validate or vindicate those adjustments.

Efforts toward sustaining ecosystems - whether it is the spotted owl, the pine marten or indigenous species - underscore the fact that the Sierra is not a static forest. Over the years, the forest has responded to the human equation again and again. In 1992, for example, the Sierra counted 7.7 million recreation days. For the most part these forest users can be found at nine major reservoirs or along 1,200 miles of fishing streams, or on 1,230 miles of hiking trails or 1,410 miles of forest road.

Today, the Sierra and the other national forests have come a long way from those fledgling days of yesteryear. Within its own ranks, the Forest Service has reached out to recognize the rights of minorities, native American Indians, women and the physically challenged. Much like the other forests of this nation, the Sierra National Forest is dynamic, committed to change and sustainable ecosystems.

This is the story of the people and forces that have shaped the Sierra National Forest over the past hundred years. It is a story of service, dedication and commitment. It is also a story of constant change in meeting the needs of a growing nation - and doing so with the same sense of mission and enthusiasm. So let's step back in time and wander through the forestlands of yesterday. Along the way we may meet up with those early rangers and swap a tall tale or two. The trail is right ahead. But be forewarned: there are some rough spots up the line, but I think you'll appreciate the past as well as the pathway. So come, the Sierra's rich and colorful past is calling.

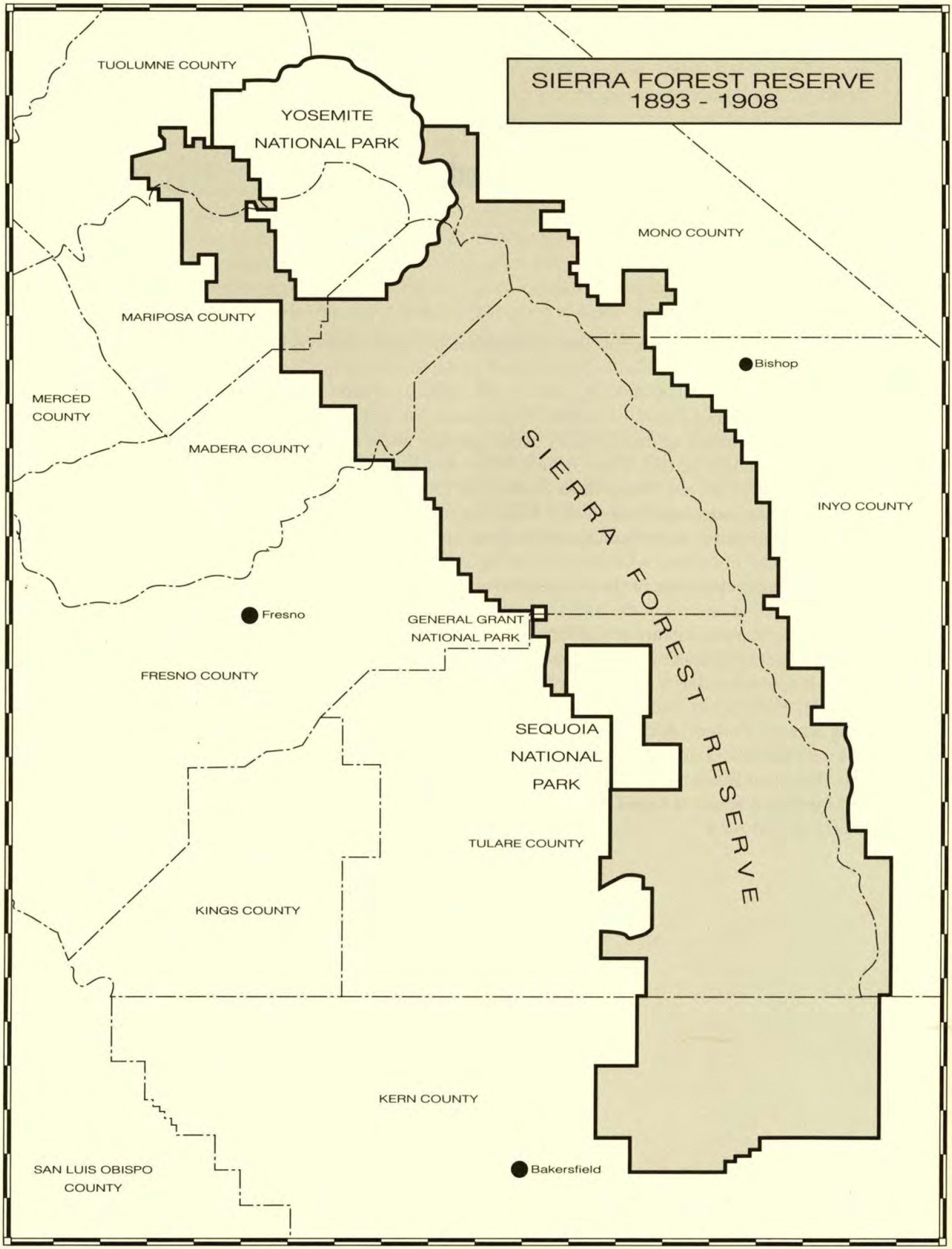
Acknowledgements

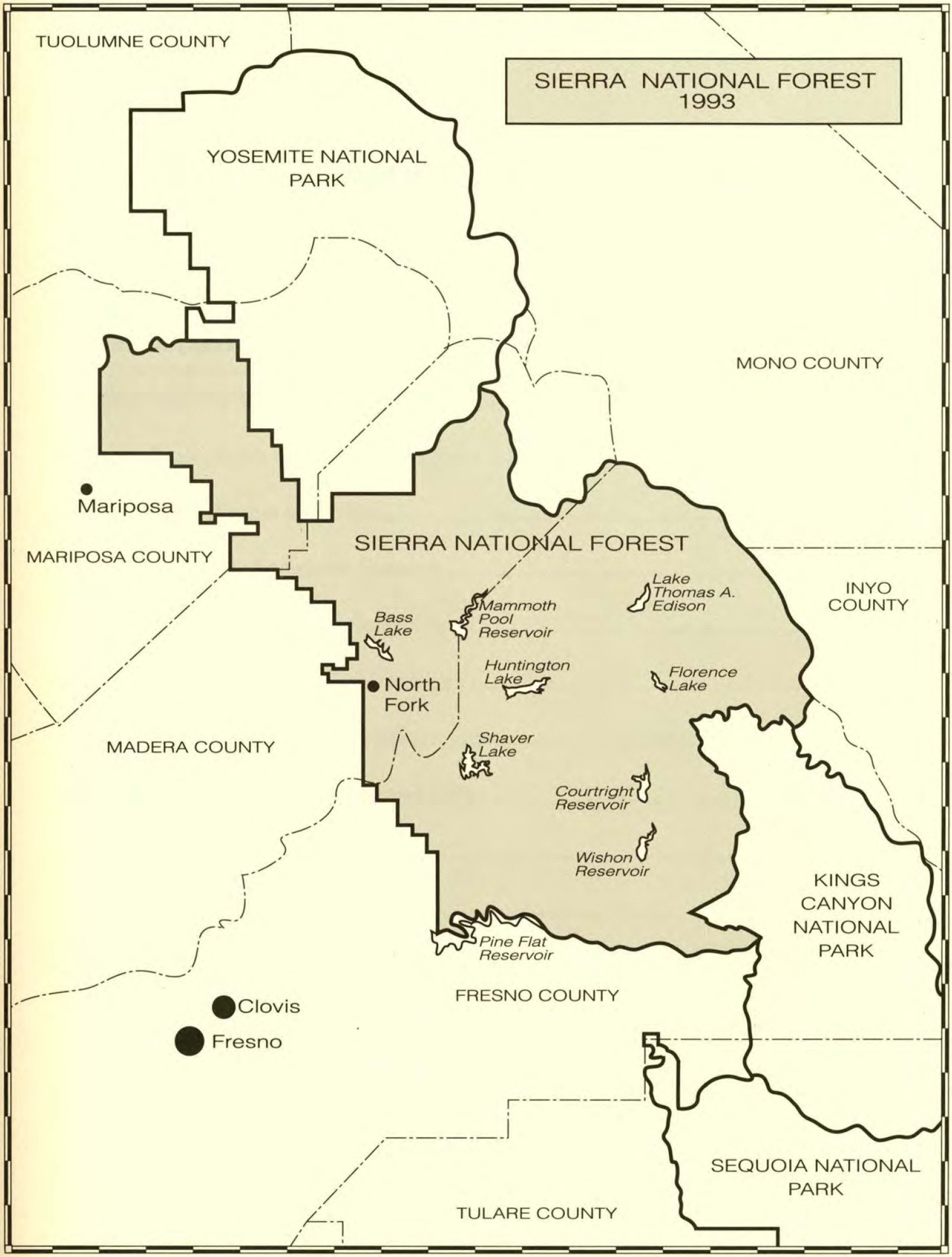
The roots for this book run deep; they touch many locations and personalities, covering the first century of pioneering and resource management on the Sierra National Forest. The effort to trace this history could not have been attempted without the assistance of many individuals and organizations. At the top of the mountain stands the handful of old-timers, past and present Forest Service employees and permittees who opened up their memory banks and their photo albums and their love of the forest so that this story might be told. They include Walter and Vivian Puhn, Ed and Doris Steen, Fred and Clarabelle Ross, John and Marge Hawksworth, Phil Ellis, Finis Shepherd and Steve Beck.

I am also indebted to those ad hoc historians from North Fork who also contributed their information and anecdotes. A posthumous tribute goes out to Dr. John Lewis and June English, two fine researchers and historians, who though working independently, spent much of their final years researching the developments on the forest. Although both have crossed the final summit years ago, their deep and abiding interest in the forest is well documented and preserved in the Special Collection Department, Madden Library at California State University, Fresno. Along such lines, the efforts of special collections librarian Ron Mahoney and his fine staff merits special recognition.

I would also like to thank the reference department of The Fresno County Library; the California State Library at Sacramento; the Bancroft and other libraries at the University of California; along with the Fresno, Madera and Mariposa historical societies. Jim Snyder and Linda Ead of the Yosemite Research Library; and Dwight Barnes of Oakhurst also contributed their historic perspective. Historians Helen and Forest Clingan offered their insights and perspective. Of the Sierra's own staff the contributions of Karen Miller, Tom Nave, Trudy Tucker and Sue Exline have been helpful. To all I am indebted.

Gene Rose
Aug. 23, 1993


SIERRA FOREST RESERVE
1893 - 1908
TUOLUMNE COUNTY
YOSEMITE
NATIONAL PARK
MONO COUNTY
MARIPOSA COUNTY
Bishop
MERCED
COUNTY
MADERA COUNTY
SIERRA FOREST RESERVE
INYO COUNTY
Fresno
GENERAL GRANT
NATIONAL PARK
FRESNO COUNTY
SEQUOIA
NATIONAL
PARK
TULARE COUNTY
KINGS COUNTY
KERN COUNTY
SAN LUIS OBISPO
COUNTY
Bakersfield


SIERRA NATIONAL FOREST
1993
TUOLUMNE COUNTY
YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK
MONO COUNTY
Mariposa
MARIPOSA COUNTY
SIERRA NATIONAL FOREST
INYO COUNTY
Lake Thomas A. Edison
Mammoth Pool Reservoir
Bass Lake
Huntington Lake
Florence Lake
North Fork
MADERA COUNTY
Shaver Lake
Courtright Reservoir
Wishon Reservoir
KINGS CANYON NATIONAL PARK
Pine Flat Reservoir
FRESNO COUNTY
Clovis
Fresno
SEQUOIA NATIONAL PARK
TULARE COUNTY

Dedication

This book is dedicated to "silent partners" of the Sierra National Forest, especially to the wives of those early rangers and fire guards, along with the early clerks, secretaries, lookouts and other "flag-raisers" who enabled other women to take their rightful place on the national forests of this country.

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Chapter One

Birth of The Reserve

Tom Agnew could hardly believe his eyes. Wherever he looked he saw fires burning across the Sierra, sending great columns of smoke into the sky.

Agnew, a miner who had settled near the headwaters of the San Joaquin River - in a meadow that would one day bear his name - was amazed at the number of fires. As he made his way down the canyon to Jackass Meadows that fall of 1888 - a horseback trip of approximately 15 miles - he counted 92 separate fires. From past experience, the veteran mountain man knew that the fires had been set by departing sheepherders in an effort to encourage new forage the following year.[1]

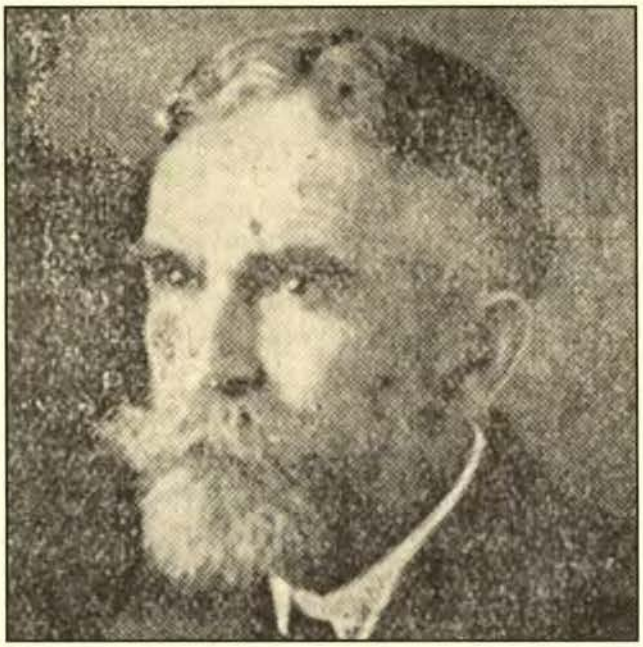
The fires were not an isolated event. The Sierra Nevada, the mountain backbone of the fledgling state of California was under attack from several quarters. Indiscriminate logging, fraudulent land claims, game poaching and hydraulic mining had left their marks on the mountains. The situation had become so critical that one Fresno newspaper reported in August 1892 that the Sierra forests were "fast disappearing." Down the rugged San Joaquin River canyon the devastation was apparent. "At many places on Pine Ridge may be seen the effects of having the forest removed. The mills have cut out the marketable timber, and fires have killed all the undergrowth. In many places the mountains are desolate and bare, where a few years ago they were covered with dense forests. The cutting down of the large timber is not the most destructive part. It is the fire that sweeps over the ground killing all the young growth....Much of the former beauty of Pine Ridge has 'gone glimmering with the dream of things that were'.[2]

For thousands of years the forests of the Sierra Nevada had endured fires, floods and storms, but until the arrival of Euro-American man, the forests and foothills had remained relatively untouched by man. As the first white prospectors and pioneers came onto the scene they began displacing the aboriginal Americans. Over the decades, man-caused abuses were inflicted not only on the mountains, but also on the watershed on which the booming agriculture in the San Joaquin Valley depended.

The problem had intensified with the discovery of gold at Sutter's Mill in 1848, followed by the great Gold Rush. In the years following thousands of fortune seekers descended on the slopes of the Sierra, all consumed with striking it rich. Next to food, their most immediate need was lumber to build their sluice boxes and cabins and heat their crude hovels. Almost overnight the first sawmills appeared and began meeting the demand. Wood, lumber, became a major commodity.

In the central Sierra, the Lovejoy Mill was built on Bear Creek, Mariposa County, in 1852.[3] Two years later another crude mill began cutting near Meadow Lakes, on Pine Ridge. The demand for lumber became more acute after California became a state in 1850 as more settlers headed westward.

Other pioneers were also turning to the Sierra for support and sustenance. With the onset of the Civil War — and with Union forces cut off from Southern cotton — large bands of sheep had been brought to the valley to compete with the large, free-ranging herds of cattle that had dominated the livestock scene for years. But then, as periodic droughts ravaged the land, the stockmen began driving their animals to the Sierra. Here,



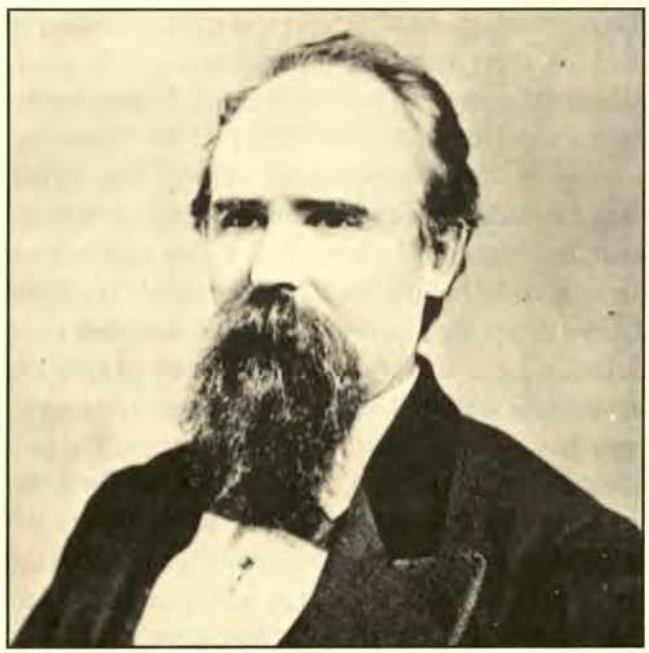
Charles S. Newhall, superintendent Sierra Forest Reserve, 1898-1905.

within the lush mountain meadows they found the food and water that would sustain their herds. The importance and value of the meadows and the timberlands were soon recognized.

Elsewhere, the miners and the market hunters were living off the land, fouling the streams and killing off the wildlife. The cut-and-run loggers were cutting wherever they pleased. Land was being taken on any pretext and in every manner possible. Great land barons along with individual settlers were looking at every loophole in the liberal land measures to exploit the public lands.

According to records of the United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service, William Stephenson, a native of Tennessee who had arrived in the valley in 1853, was one of the first stockmen to move to the mountains, somewhere around 1867. While two sheepmen, known only as McCrea and Darby, had apparently grazed animals there earlier, Stephenson left his legacy and name on Pine Ridge, the so-called Pinery, which today defines much of the Shaver Lake area.[4] When the great drought of 1877 hit the valley, the competition for the mountain meadows became fierce. Every meadow was contested, occasionally leading to "six shooter leases, grass wars," or threats and violence. As a result the mountain rangelands were often grazed to the bare ground. Across the country, similar depredations were occurring in forest lands. More and more people were demanding corrective action. By 1887, pressure was coming from the California Legislature which passed a resolution asking Congress to set aside all government forest lands as a "permanent forest reserve."[5] Another severe fire year in 1889 focused additional attention on the problem. More voices spoke up, pressing for relief. Finally in 1891, Congress approved an omnibus bill, one section of which had been drafted by an organization known as the American Forest Association. That section authorized the president to create a system of "forest reserves" for conservation purposes. President Benjamin Harrison signed the bill in March 1891. Less than a month later, the president designated as the first "forest reserve" the area surrounding Yellowstone National Park.

Secretary of the Interior John Noble, who had helped draft the legislation, then directed the General Land Office to look at other public lands that might make suitable reserves. The San Francisco office responded. Early in 1892 special agent Benjamin "B.F." Allen was appointed to study the forests and watershed in California, Arizona and New Mexico.[6] A former Iowa banker, Allen made extensive field trips, looking at those forest lands that might be suitable for reserve status. About a

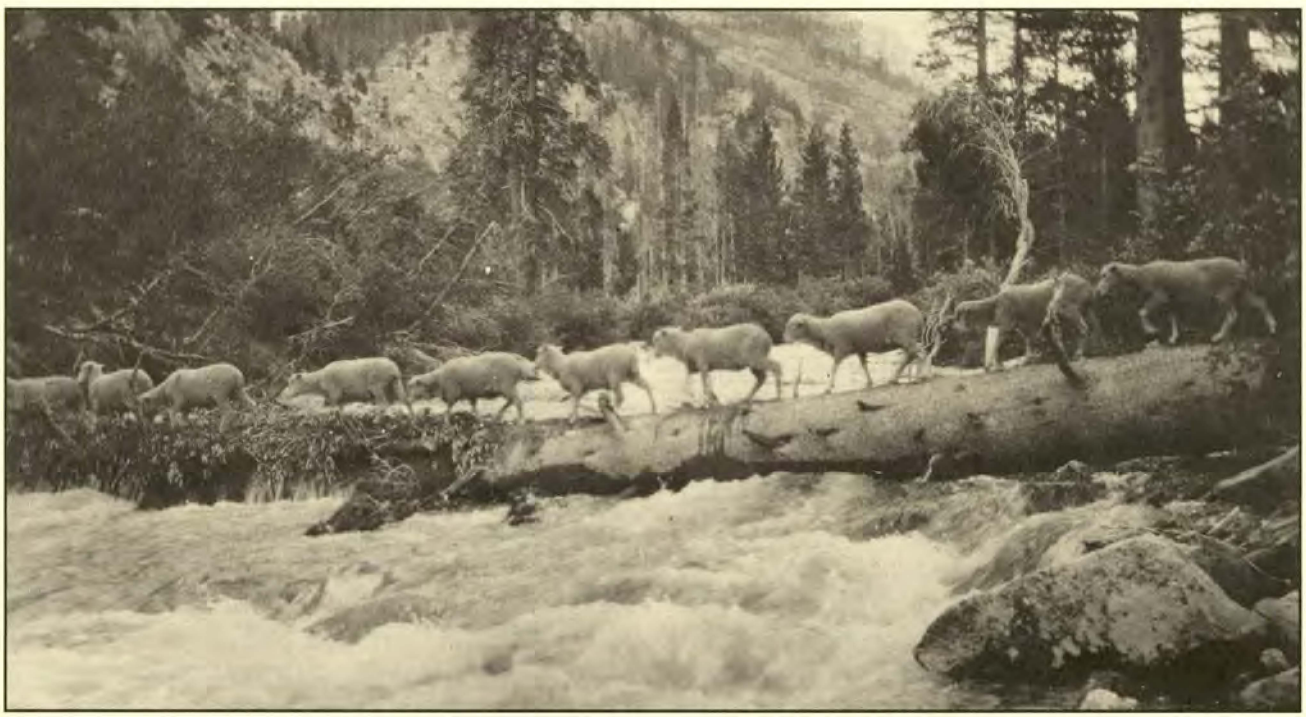


Foothill cowboy Charles O'Neal, first reserve ranger.

year later, following an extended field survey, Allen submitted his report. Acting upon his recommendations, along with pressures from California congressional leaders, Thomas H. Carter, the land office commissioner, urged President Harrison to set aside four reserves in California. Harrison first set aside the 555,520-acre San Gabriel Timber Reserve on December 10, 1892. Early on, advocates for a Sierra reserve had proposed a Tulare Forest Reserve. A Sierra Timber Reserve also was mentioned. Allen observed that he had gone to great lengths to contact the settlers living near to the proposed reserve. With the exception of the sheepmen, a few miners around Kernville and a handful of settlers near Fresno Flats there was little opposition to the proposed reserve.

"On the contrary, the leading citizens there complain of the devastation caused by flocks of sheep from the valley, passing over their lands, and think that if included in the reservation, they would escape this annoyance," the land agent observed. "If the reserve is established, the benefit to California will be beyond estimate; because thereby, the sources of water supply will be guarded and preserved," Allen wrote.[7] Allen's main focus centered on the watershed; little mention was made of the timber or other forest resources. His recommendation included nearly 5,000,000 acres covering eight rivers and their tributaries - covering those elevations from 3,000 to 15,000 feet(sic). "The proposed reservation is the roughest and most mountainous portion of the United States, and reaches the highest elevation in the Union, outside of Alaska." But within a few weeks of his report, the size was reduced and the name changed to the Sierra Forest Reserve. Although his 12-page Sierra report failed to include the precise acreage of the affected land, Allen submitted a crude map of the proposed boundaries - noting that an accurate survey of the vast area would be expensive and time consuming.[8]

To Allen's way of thinking, a reserve would end many of the abuses that were occurring on public lands. "Now is the time. No hardship can accrue to any persons, or at the worst to more than a very few, by making the reservation now. Those parties who are using these public lands for pasturage or lumbering purposes have no legitimate claim thereto, while a great wrong is being done to the public at large," he concluded.[9] Two months later, February 14, 1893, President Benjamin Harrison signed an executive order setting aside



Sheep and other livestock often went to extremes to reach the lush Sierra meadows — similar to this early 1900s crossing of the San Joaquin River.

The early loggers left their mark — and legacy — on the Sierra, providing the lumber that enabled the nation to grow and prosper.

the huge Sierra Forest Reserve. With 4,057,476 acres the reserve was the sixth and the largest in the nation, embracing eight counties and covering much of the mountains in a 170-mile-long and 50-mile-wide area between the Tuolumne and Kern rivers.[10]

Other changes had come to the land affected by the forest reserve. In 1893, Madera County split away from Fresno County, which had separated from Mariposa County in 1856. Giant sawmills, complete with their own railroads and flumes, were emerging at Sugar Pine, Shaver and Millwood. The old Indian trails had become drive trails for livestock - and were later turned into wagon roads. And there were reports that something known as electricity would soon be generated within the great river gorge known as the San Joaquin River Canyon. Newcomers were rushing to California in a last effort to pick up a homestead or a piece of government land before the doors of the frontier shut tight. Although a handful of miners were still picking around the Mariposa mines, most of the original argonauts had faded from the scene - or had become established farmers, merchants or loggers.

Jessie Blakey Ross was one early pioneer who had become well established on his ranch, located about 10 miles northeast of today's North Fork. Born in Missouri and reared in Kentucky, the young Ross had come west at the tail end of the Gold Rush. At first he made a living hauling supplies in mines in Mariposa County. In the late 1860s, he spotted a parcel of land overlooking the San Joaquin River Canyon and apparently made a pre-emptive claim. He built a small cabin in the wilderness, hewing the timbers by hand. Like many other argonauts, Ross eventually took a Mono Indian woman as his wife. In 1871 a daughter was born; but nine years later his wife, Mary Waspi, went back to her people, leaving Ross alone on his ranch. Down the years Ross continued to work at various jobs. Up until 1890 he was listed as a miner. Then he became a farmer, planting a orchard and growing wheat and beans until his apple and pear trees began producing. Ross' Ranch became a landmark. While there is no record to verify his con-

Some of the longest flumes in the world came off the Sierra Forest Reserve, delivering a forest of lumber to mills at Clovis, Pinedale and Sanger.

cern, Ross, like many of those early mountain settlers, did not obtain his homestead patent until 1900. Through those pioneering days, he continued to forge ahead, struggling to build his life and ranch within the fledgling forest reserve.

From the start the reserve system was plagued with problems. While set aside for "conservation," the mission of the reserve administrators was essentially undefined - and unfunded. While the legislation authorized the hiring of employees to administer the reserves, Congress had chosen not to appropriate any funds. In other words, Congress had approved no management plan and the reserves were simply closed areas - restricted to entry or land claim. Placed under the General Land Office of the Department of Interior, all of the reserves remained in limbo. For many the designation generated more questions than answers. "What is the meaning of a reserve?" asked many of those affected. "Everybody thought that a 'Reserve' meant something selfish, useless, locked-up, taken from the community and the people."[11] The doubt and concern soon surfaced, creating a firestorm of controversy -one that was further fueled by a lack of accurate boundary maps or legal definitions.

Unfortunately the Reserve Act provided no administrative or management controls. From 1893 to 1897 the Sierra Forest Reserve had no rangers or guardians. At Fresno Flats the early settlers formed an ad hoc group known as the Citizens Protection Association. Led by early settler George Teaford, the organization petitioned the government to exclude their lands -and those they had been using - from the new Sierra Reserve. However, his association still wanted the government to protect the nearby forests "from those outsiders" who were coming onto the forest to graze their animals and wrecking havoc.[12]

One Small Step to the Sierra Forest Reserve

Hite: A Sierra Placename

Before the Sierra Forest Reserve arrived on the scene in the 1890s, the mountains, meadows and timberlands of the Sierra Nevada were available for the taking. It was similar to a gigantic fire sale - a big give-away.

Under a variety of land acts that were designed to encourage western settlement, thousands of acres of public lands were transferred to private ownership in one of the greatest give-aways the nation had ever known.

The Homestead Act, the Mining Act of 1872 and the Timber and Stone Act of 1876 encouraged many of the abuses. The Swamp and Overflow Act became one of the most commonly flaunted measures. By placing a rowboat on a wagon, and then having a team of horses pull the wagon across a lush mountain meadow, a stockman could vouch that he had traversed the entire area in a rowboat - thereby claiming title to what was supposed to be swampland. It was an inexpensive way to get a mountain meadow; the stockman and his animals loved the act. The native American Indians could only cry.

Then there was the case of John Hite, who

John Hite, left foreground, was one of the few pioneers to be prosecuted for illegal cutting.

Over the past century, the Hite Cove mining camp has lost much of its original glitter.

founded a mine along the south fork of the Merced River in the 1860s - at what was to become Hite Cove. Under the mining law, a miner could cut timber from the public lands for his own use and use in the mine. But Hite found the lumber as valuable as gold, and cut the trees by the mountainside, which he then sold to eager buyers. Over time he made a lot of money.

In one rare case of prosecution for timber theft, a General Land Office agent came in and scaled the stumps he had cut and then sent Hite a bill for $80,000. At first Hite refused to pay; but he eventually settled up after he was hauled into court in 1885, with an extended, expensive and celebrated trial.

Most of the timber barons continued to cut away, however. Since there was no other way to obtain the trees they needed, many of the early sawmills relied on "entrymen," who filed on the forest land and then sold it back to the mills for a few dollars. In many cases they acquired the best stands. As the depredations increased so did the calls for reform. Citizens began complaining, seeking protection for the ravaged watersheds of California. In 1890, the California Board of Forestry petitioned Congress to act. While the theft of timber was bad enough, the loss was "insignificant compared with the standing timber and young forest that is annually swept away by the combined evil agencies of fire and sheep," the board observed.

While the creation of the Forest Reserve Act of 1891 did not stop the abuses, it set in process one of the most far-reaching reforms in the annals of American land policy, eventually leading to the creation of the Forest Service.

To some degree, both Allen and Noble had contributed to the confusion, perhaps reflecting their own doubts about the purpose of a reserve. Allen had apparently underestimated the opposition to government control of the land. He also had reported that the reserve would make a "great national park," which would trigger additional controversy. Noble saw the reserve as a restricted area - closed to public entry or use until Congress decided what to do with the land. Some of their confusion may have been understandable for other forces had been at work.

Conservation and/or preservation groups represented new, even radical, ideas. Less than three years earlier, Yosemite, Sequoia and General Grant national parks had been established. John Muir and the Sierra Club had just come onto the scene. The idea of preserving something for itself stood diametrically opposed to the doctrine of the day, which held that the forests were a barrier to man's progress and efforts to civilize the West: forests needed to be utilized. Similarly, forestry as a science or a body of knowledge directed to a sustainable arboreal ecosystem was still waiting for the dawn of enlightenment.

For the first four years little was done. As much as anything, the Sierra Forest Reserve was a reserve in name only. When the U.S. Army Cavalry was enlisted to post the boundaries of the reserve, Capt. Parker, the acting superintendent of Sequoia National Park, observed that the notices were torn down immediately and the trespass continued. On his tour of the reserve in 1896, Professor William Dudley of the Sierra Club reported that there was no protection against fire, timber thieves or sheepherders.[13] And when the first government inspectors came onto the reserve, they were unable to see any difference in the management of the reserve and the adjacent private lands. Neither Congress nor the General Land Office could find ways to put full time forces in the field. For the most part, it was "business as usual" as the loggers, stockmen and miners ignored the reserve's regulations.[14]

In particular, the stockmen felt they had an inalienable right to graze their animals on the public lands - the open range - and they pointed to their historic use of the range. They became more exercised and outspoken. Some "badgered and bedeviled" the President and the Congress to rescind or annul the legislation that had given birth to the reserves.[15] The sheepmen went to the press, claiming "millions of sheep would die" if they could not graze in the parks or reserves. The more militant sheepmen mounted a direct challenge and began taking their animals onto the reserve. Their

Fishing and forest recreation got off to a good start in the 1890s when the original Shaver millpond came onto the scene.

The early rangers apparently used Tom Agnew's high country cabin during their turn-of-the century patrols of the sprawling Sierra Forest Reserve.

big push occurred during the drought years of the late 1890s. At one point it was estimated that nearly 500,000 sheep were grazing in the reserve, illegally of course.[16] The competition for the life-sustaining meadows became fierce. Almost every meadow was contested, leading to some limited and so-called "range wars," and fatalities.

Against this mounting background of abuses, some congressmen and other concerned citizens began urging that the reserves -"Division R" - the so-called orphan of the General Land Office -be transferred to the Division of Forestry within the Department of Agriculture. Opponents of the reserve, led by a few Western congressmen, resisted the transfer, believing they could force the dissolution of the reserve system through neglect or default, and thereby return the affected lands to public entry. Against this dilemma it soon became obvious that something needed to be done.

In 1896 the Forest Reserve Commission, including Harvard botanist Charles Sargent, pioneer forester Gifford Pinchot and conservationist John Muir visited the California reserves as part of a nationwide tour. As a result of their report, the General Land Office in early 1897 appointed Allen as a special forest agent for California and Arizona with headquarters in Los Angeles. The commission also proposed two new reserves for California, including the Tahoe and Stanislaus forest reserves. Nationwide, the commission urged the creation of 13 additional reserves of 21 million acres, which President Grover Cleveland proclaimed shortly thereafter, triggering even more debate.[17] Concurrently, the General Land Office drafted a piece of legislation which provided the first guidelines under which the reserves were to be managed. Congress passed the measure in June of that year, 1897, the Organic Administration Act, which provided funding and staff for the reserves. Against that background things started to happen.

The head of the land office, Commissioner Binger Hermann, a former Oregon congressman, was authorized to appoint superintendents for each state with reserves, along with a supervisor and rangers for each reserve. Special Agent Allen was directed to hire a corps of rangers who could regain control of the reserve. In the summer of 1898 the first rangers were hired. It appears that those hired were expected to patrol the reserve from their ranches located around Mariposa, Raymond, North Fork, Sonora, Sampson Flat and Visalia and at Fort Independence on the eastern side of the Sierra. The

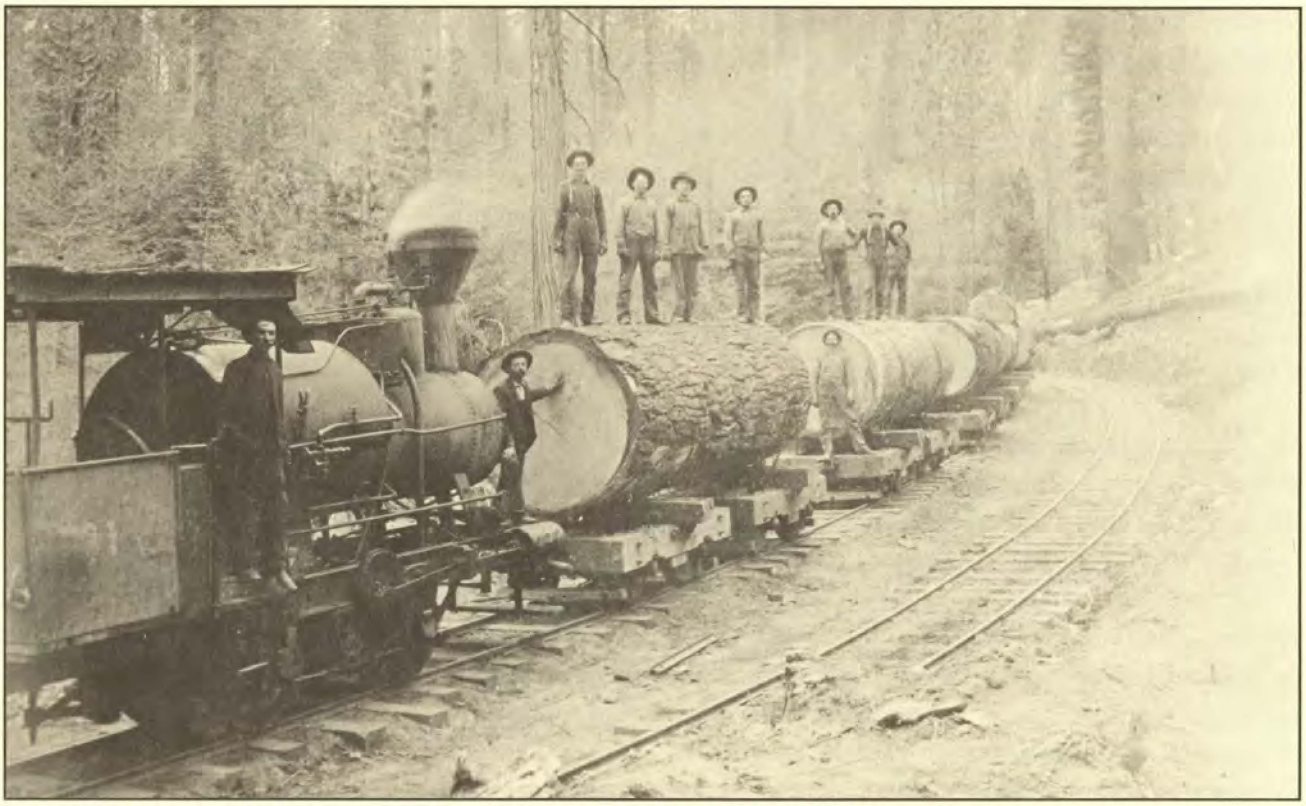
An early ranger surveys the elusive, fluctuating boundary of the reserve in the Owens Valley.

hiring left much to be desired.

At the onset the ranger's responsibilities and duties were ill defined - if at all. Basically, they were told to put out fires and keep sheep off the reserve. They were to be paid $50 a month, providing their own horse and feed. However, lingering uncertainty over funding made their employment seasonal at best. These early rangers were usually local cattlemen or cowboys who accepted the job in connection with other work. "Most of the early rangers owned cattle of their own or herded stock for other people; the advantage of the ranger's job being extra money and certain authority over the grazing matters - which might not do them or their employer any harm," one early observer noted.[18]

Shortly after the creation of Stanislaus Forest Reserve and four other reserves in 1898, Hermann ordered a "re-adjustment" of the administrative territories in California. At that juncture, Charles S. Newhall, a former Methodist minister from New Jersey, was placed in charge of the reserves in Southern California, while Allen was to manage the reserves in the northern part of the state.[19] The two were part of the 11 new superintendents who were to lead the network of reserves that now stretched across the nation. After some confusion over their areas of responsibility, the two men resolved the matter when Newhall deferred to Allen, noting that Allen had seniority and was already established in Los Angles and was reluctant to move. Newhall then move to Fresno while Allen assumed responsibility for the reserves in Southern California and Arizona. [20]

Comparatively little is known of Newhall or the location of his Fresno office. His main claim to fame is that he had authored some articles on trees, shrubs and vines. Perhaps more important, Newhall had some powerful friends in Washington, D.C., including Interior Secretary Cornelius N. Bliss, who had aided him in finding a job. In his book, "Breaking New Ground," pioneer forester Gifford Pinchot takes a dim view of Newhall, citing his appointment as a classic case of "politics in the woods." "He came from New Jersey, and had once been a preacher, and had compiled two little volumes on the trees and shrubs of northeastern America, all of which qualified him to take charge of a Forest Reserve in California, where he was stationed. He was a timid little man, as unable to deal with the Sierra Nevada mountaineers as he was to travel the



The big Sierra sawmills had their own railroad to deliver their one-log loads to the millponds.

mountains. His explorations went as far as the stage went, and stopped right there."[21] The actual number of rangers hired during the summer of 1898 is not certain. A handful of historians have cited the "original 60" rangers as those identified in the Official Register of Officers and Employees in the Civil, Military and Navy that was published the following year, which separated the reserve into Sierra South and Sierra North.[22] Apparently, however, not all of those hired ever went to work. Besides Allen and Newhall, four supervisors were hired, stationed at Mariposa, Raymond, Visalia and at Long Valley on the east side of the reserve.

At Mariposa, George Langenberg - who just happened to be a relative of commissioner Hermann - obtained a supervisor job. Despite these connections he was soon suspended. Allegedly, Langenberg had several unusual habits, including making the serious mistake of renting out the reserve's stock ranges "without taking the trouble to notify Washington about either the fees or the rental agreements."[23] To some extent it didn't matter. By November, Hermann had instructed Newhall that since winter was coming he could lay off any supervisors or rangers -since the funds for the forest reserve were being rapidly exhausted. The following summer was no less trying for the reserve and for Newhall. At that time he was authorized to hire 33 rangers and four supervisors for the Sierra Reserve. For the Northern Division, J.W. Dobson was named Supervisor at Mariposa; Langenberg, having been cleared of earlier charges, was directed to establish headquarters at some more convenient location as Supervisor of the Central Division; and W.C. Bartlett was appointed Supervisor of the Southern Division at Porterville. On the newly created Stanislaus Reserve, Supervisor W.A. Buck was directed to establish headquarters at Sugar Pine. When the Tahoe Forest Reserve was established in 1899, it also fell under Newhall's administration.[24] The frequent changes in supervisors drew criticism from several quarters that those involved could not become acquainted with either the local people or the Reserve itself.

Newhall soon ran into trouble with Commissioner Hermann, who supervised the reserves from Washington D.C. Repeatedly he made

Newhall's life miserable, castigating him for "exceeding his authority." For instance, when Newhall attempted to sell some "dead and downed" timber in 1898, he was severely reprimanded by Hermann. "You are informed that you have no authority whatever nor has any forestry office, ranger or any agent or employee of this office, to sell or permit the sale of down and dead wood or timber of any description from the forestry reserve without proper written orders from this office."[25]

Newhall had no better luck the second time around when he attempted to arrange a small timber sale to the Peckinpah's North Fork sawmill - the first of its kind on the reserve. Hermann blasted Newhall's arrangements for advertising the proposed sale. A glimpse of the correspondence between the two suggests that Newhall was criticized or admonished at almost every turn. Late or incomplete reports, excessive use of telegrams, and his inability to follow instructions drew Hermann's fire and ire. Reprimand followed reprimand. At one point Newhall was apparently reduced in rank to Supervisor. Even when he followed procedures he was intimidated. "You are advised that this office will not entertain any application for running hogs on the reserve." It seems Newhall was the superintendent of nothing - except the reserve from hell. In addition, Newhall also acquired the reputation of being an office-bound superintendent, reluctant to go afield by horseback - another deficiency Hermann criticized. "It has come to the knowledge of this office that some forest supervisors are in the habit of patrolling their forest reserves in carriages or other wheeled conveyances, and that the extent of their supervision goes only so far as wheel can take them. I desire a report as to whether you have under your jurisdiction any supervisors who make a practice of patrolling their reserves. It is plain to anyone that a supervisor to be in touch with his rangers, and to oversee his reserve as his duties require, must be to a greater or lesser extent, on horseback," Hermann pontificated.[26]

One of Newhall's most trying tasks resulted from the 1899 trespass of the reserve by sheep belonging to pioneer Fresno County stockman Jesse August Blasingame. In that test of wills, the herd-

It took more than the winter snows to stop the early pioneers, seen here in the mountains above North Fork.

Besides Yosemite, the old Raymond-to-Yosemite stage introduced a lot of tourists to the Sierra Forest Reserve, also.

ers managed to slip 3,500 sheep onto the reserve by removing the sheep bells and moving the animals at night. The Fresno Republican reported that "Foresters Fowler and Weisman, the local guardians of the National reservations(sic), have their eagle eyes kept wide open, watching the sheepmen whose flocks are nibbling along near the line of forbidden ground." [27]

On one occasion, Boze Ely, a former deputy Fresno County Sheriff, was caught in the process and hauled into federal court. "Five witnesses were introduced by the prosecution, the principal of whom were the rangers, J.D. Westfall and his assistant, J.E. Crane. They told how Eley(sic) and his herders got past them into the reserve. When the trespassers were discovered near the headwaters of Mono Creek, according to the testimony, they offered Westfall $50 and Crane $30 to leave them unmolested and report that there were no sheep in the mountains," the paper reported.[28]

The initial efforts to prosecute went relatively nowhere because the U.S. Attorney's office was reluctant to press the case. Hermann railed at the situation and began badgering Newhall to seek both civil and criminal prosecution. The stockmen, organizing around Blasingame threatened to invade the reserve openly. Hermann repeatedly wrote Newhall of the need to enforce the grazing ban. He insisted that the case be prosecuted, claiming the credibility of the government and the reserve were at stake. When the case finally got to court, the herders were fined the grand sum of five dollars apiece - a figure that outraged Hermann, who had estimated that the sheep had consumed "pasturage worth six or eight hundred dollars." While a settlement was finally worked out between Blasingame and the government, Newhall had become the most seriously injured. The early reserve rangers rode a rough and uncertain trail when it came to job security. Nearly all were temporary employees, subject to the political winds and uncertain appropriations of the times. In most cases they were hired for two or three months during the fire season and then were laid off -to be hired again the next season - if they were lucky - or unlucky. Others, having discovered the rugged realities of the job, left after a month or two. Working for the reserve meant low wages, long hours in remote areas and often under dangerous conditions. Wildfires, weather or confrontations with angry squat-

ters or irate stockmen were not unusual. It was only the dedicated ones who stuck around.

On one rare visit to Ellis Meadow, Newhall, along with his wife and a government timber inspector, drove up in a buggy just as ranger Gene Tully and two other rangers were saddling up for a high country patrol. When Newhall saw the rangers strap on their pistols he threw up his hands in alarm. "Boys, boys, what are you wearing those pistols for?" he demanded.

"Oh, just for persuasion - in case of emergency," one ranger responded.

"My heavens, you wouldn't use them, would you?" Newhall asked.

"We hope we won't have to, but some of those tramp bands of sheepmen are stubborn, rugged rascals and may cause trouble," the ranger replied.

Newhall implored the rangers not to use force.

"Suppose they refused to move out or submit to arrest?" the rangers countered.

"Oh, they won't do that. Tell them you are United States officers and they must go, please do so and avoid trouble."

"Mr. Newhall, those fellows don't understand polite requests, and a bluff may have to be called," Tully recalled saying.[29]

Years later Tully observed that some shots were exchanged and herders were wounded, but most of those incidents were disagreements between competing stockmen over range. In bringing some control over the grazing controversy, Tully said the rangers had to be careful because they had no assurance that the government would back them if they ran into trouble. "The issue was always in question. We rangers were all disgusted .... Our boss requested us to be patient, that things were working toward change. We knew that. The Super's scalp was in jeopardy."

Nepotism, incompetence, malfeasance and inappropriate conduct seemed to define the early days of the reserve. The bosses, the first superintendents, were little more than political appointees, who were more concerned with paychecks than the rules of the reserves.[30] The reserve jobs were often doled out on the basis of "spoils" - with the party in power determining who got the job. Gifford Pinchot observed that Binger Hermann represented something of the worst case scenario. "The average appointee was bad enough, but Binger's personal appointments

The life of the early forest settlers was not for the weak or timid.

were horrible." When Pinchot added up Hermann's land office appointees they included three brothers-in-law, a nephew, a son-in-law and an elderly friend and neighbor, who admitted that he knew "nothing about forest conditions."[31]

The first rangers were handicapped in other ways. There were no standards or examination as to their qualifications. Uniforms, badges or identification as a federal officer had not yet arrived on the scene. One of Newhall's final accomplishments involved getting some identity badges for the rangers.

Some of those early patrols went beyond the call of duty. Considering the low pay and short season, some historians wonder how the service ever retained anyone. In the fall of 1900, for instance, Ranger J.H. Powers made an extended two-week patrol in the southern section of the reserve. His diary showed that he rode about 25 miles a day, moving sheep off the reserve. At day's end he would make camp in the open, brew a cup of coffee and dine on a hard biscuit and dried meat and then roll up in a blanket on the ground, hoping his stock would not stray away during the night. The next morning he would rise and repeat the process again. "Left camp at Sand Canyon at 6 a.m. via Indian Wells and Coyotes Holes. Escorted three bands sheep through Walkers Pass and went on to upper south fork for feed. Arrived at (camp) 5:30 p.m.. Miles traveled, 35," Powers' diary related.[32]

Often the rangers were sent far afield to some distant part of the reserve to expel sheep. At such times their travel expenses for horse feed and livery charges far exceeded their salary. Repeated efforts to obtain reimbursement were invariably rejected. Even when the rangers attempted to obtain grazing on the reserve - for stock animals engaged in government work -their requests were routinely denied. One of the more egregious incidents occurred in October 1899, when Ranger H.D. Gill submitted a claim for $40 for camping equipment and a pack mule lost in an accident while on patrol. The response from Washington was almost typical. "There is no fund available for payment of losses of the character referred to; forest rangers are required to furnish their own horse and camp outfits and the chance of a loss is a risk which they assume on entering the service. I regret Mr. Gill's loss but am unable to afford him relief," the crusty Hermann responded.[33]

In most cases, those hired as rangers or ranger guards were local people, cowboys, loggers or those who had some familiarity with the nearby forestlands. No one had any training in forestry. In some respects, the grazing controversy between the sheep and cattlemen amounted to ethnic or racial discrimination, with "local cattlemen against the itinerant sheepmen" with their foreign herders, often Basque, Portuguese or Mexican.[34] "Who, owning no land and paying no taxes, are most thoroughly despised by their American neighbors."[35] Some historians have defended the land office, blaming Congress for turning the reserves into political pawns. Repeatedly the General Land Office tried to secure more funding and staff to deal with the abuses. Repeatedly Congress refused to deal with the situation. Many of the opponents of the reserves recognized that a transfer would make the reserves more effective and probably more powerful - something they didn't want. Instead, they wanted to rid the country of the reserves and open the land to private development - almost at any cost.[36]

On the other side of the debate, the proponents who wanted to see the reserves transferred to the Department of Agriculture lamented the delay and difficulties. John Muir and the Sierra Club cited the land office's continued inability to manage the reserves in a prudent and responsible manner. At one point he suggested that the reserves would be better served if the government bought feed for the sheep rather than allow the animals to graze in the reserve and do "incalculable damage." The Sierra Club and the American Forestry Association persisted. Finally, in 1905, after years of effort, Congress acted, moving the reserves to Gifford Pinchot's Bureau of Forestry within the Department of Agriculture.

Chapter Two

The Shinn Vision and Legacy

Charles Shinn had come to North Fork by a rather circuitous route. His wife noted that he had pulled every string he knew to get his new job as "chief ranger" of the Sierra Reserve. A native of Texas, Shinn had moved to California as a four-year-old in 1856, when his parents began farming and operating a plant nursery in Alameda County. After finishing grammar school and attending "College School" at Oakland, the lanky Shinn worked at a variety of jobs, including technology school at San Luis Obispo and writing for a newspaper. Then in 1882, at age 30, he decided to return to college, attending John Hopkins University, where he graduated two years later.[1]

Shinn then returned to the Bay Area and began writing free-lance articles for newspapers and magazines. He was a prodigious writer and reader. He was particularly intrigued with Western Americana; much of his writings reflected the sagas of miners, missions and cowboys. In 1888, he married Julia Tyler, 15 years younger than he, and the two set up housekeeping in Oakland. As Shinn matured, his literary horizon broadened to plants, forestry and natural resource issues, which brought him some recognition. At that time, the science of forestry was still in its infancy, confined for most purposes to simply growing trees. But he had seen the bigger forest picture. In an 1895 article on California forestry, Shinn observed that "If we could keep our forest as the orchards of the mountains, gathering the annual timber crop there as we gather the annual fruitage below, then the time might come when fruit-tree belt and forest-tree belt would meet." He also took a shot at the timber industry for logging practices. "We have cleared off the best parts of our forest heritage at a rate which has never been surpassed." [2]

Shinn's career took a new turn in 1890 when Dr. E.W. Hilgard, of the agriculture department at the University of California, offered him a position as an inspector for one of his agricultural experimental stations. Shinn accepted and found that he enjoyed the work and the academic atmosphere of Berkeley. Over time, two other stations established by the state Bureau of Forestry were turned over to the university and to Shinn's charge. In his spare time he continued to write free-lance articles for a variety of newspapers and magazines. He became an admirer of John Muir and when the Sierra Club was formed, Shinn became one of its early members.

For the next 12 years, the scholarly Shinn continued to serve at his inspector's job. But in 1902, the state cut off funding for the stations and at age 50, the graying and balding Shinn found himself out of work. Casting around for employment, he managed to finagle a three month position, studying a proposed east side addition to the Tahoe Forest Reserve. As part of that assignment, Shinn obtained permission to take his wife along as an unpaid assistant. Once in place at Lake Tahoe, the two found the work both interesting and rewarding. At the end of his study Shinn sent in his report, recommending the addition to the proposed reserve - which was eventually approved - and then began seeking something more lasting. Not long thereafter, he heard about a possible job opening on the sprawling Sierra Forest Reserve, located just south of Yosemite National Park. Shinn began pursuing the Sierra position with a flurry of letters and inquiries. His efforts were eventually successful, even though the post as head ranger was defined as a "three month

job or until notified." He was directed to report to Superintendent C.S. Newhall at Fresno on Oct. 1, 1902.

"Frankly, Mr. Shinn pulled every possible string, and in time won an appointment as 'Head Ranger' of the Sierra Reserve, on a salary of $900 a year - with the privilege of furnishing his own horses and finding his own quarters," his wife Julia recalled.

After reporting to Newhall's office, Shinn was directed to make an inspection trip of the sprawling reserve and become acquainted with the staff. At North Fork, he met his "ranger staff" consisting of "two cattlemen, two timber fallers and one part-owner of a saw mill." Their duties, he learned, were "to stop fires, give out free timber permits and to prevent trespass" by the sheepmen. He then rode on to the other outposts, visiting rangers at Sampson Flat (above today's Pine Flat Reservoir), Three Rivers, and finally, to the east side of the Sierra near Bishop. Only then, after nearly three weeks in the saddle, did Shinn begin to comprehend the enormity of his task, the vastness of the reserve and the challenge ahead.

Newhall represented something of an enigma for the Shinns -someone who seemed to put prayer before reality. In some respects they confirmed everything Binger Hermann had been harping about for years. "There was in Fresno a 'Superintendent of Forests' who was supposed to direct the management of the reserves north of the Tehachapi and south of Yosemite - a ex-clergyman of high moral character and the best intentions in the world - but with less training for the work than we had."[3]

After completing his tour of the reserve, Shinn arranged to meet his wife in Fresno, and then go on to North Fork. Although there is no evidence to support the decision, North Fork apparently was selected as Shinn's work place because most of the rangers were there, and the site was close to the geographical center of the 1902 boundaries. The Shinns loaded their sole possessions - three or four suitcases - into a rented buckboard and set off for the wilds of North Fork. The trip took two hard days by way of Friant and O'Neals. On their arrival the Shinns began looking for housing, only to discover

Charles H. Shinn led the Sierra Forest Reserve through its formative years.

there was nothing available. A day or so later word filtered down that there was an abandoned cabin just north of town that might be usable if it could be fixed up. The Shinns located the neglected structure and then the owner. The landlord apologized for the poor condition of the building, and said they could have use of the cabin without charge until they could find something else. With no other option the Shinns moved in. With the assistance of a local handyman, they soon made the place livable. After a couple of days, they named their remote mountain outpost the "Peace Cabin" - because it was so quiet compared to their old Oakland neighborhood.

Shinn and his wife went to work in a way that would become legend - trying to establish an office and an official presence. "There were three rooms in all, but one had only boards for a roof, and the rain came through in streams, so for practical purposes that first winter there was a 'living room-bedroom-office' and a 'kitchen-diningroom-laundry," she observed. Fortunately, Julia had brought her old typewriter along so the reports and recommendations could be made readable. "Letters were kept in a candle box - but fortunately there were not many of them. Furniture was home-

made, barring the kitchen stove."[4]

Originally, the mountain settlement had been known as Browns or Brown's sawmill. At that time the small community was little more than a wide spot in the trail with a couple of stores and hotels - along with the obligatory watering trough. North Fork was, one valley newspaper noted, "a bleak little mountain center" - a long and difficult day's ride from the valley towns of Friant or Madera. Nearby South Fork claimed a hotel - operated by the pioneer Peckinpah family - and a blacksmith shop. In the surrounding hills, a scattering of ranches, some Mono Indian bark shelters, and a few "glory holes" called mines defined the landscape.[5] Some time around the mid-1880s, a sawmill and a planing mill had been established on nearby Peckinpah Mountain. This operation was then organized under the name of the North Fork Lumber Co., which eventually emerged as the community of North Fork.

During that first winter the Shinns continued to work out of their cabin - which they eventually purchased for $250 including a quarter section of land. They began meeting their new neighbors and talking about the reserve. "Another important part of that first winter was getting acquainted with the local people. They did not like the idea of a reserve. Like the rest of us true Americans, freedom was their ideal - freedom to do what they pleased as they pleased with no interference. They were small ranchers with a few head of cattle who found their 'cash money' by working summers in the lumber mills or on the county roads -kindly, friendly people but 'techy.' And there were the Indians, needing and wanting help and trusting the nearest white person. To help these hill people to see why a reserve was advisable, why fires were undesirable, why game laws should be kept, and why even a little timber cut to sell should be paid for; that was slow work and was all mixed with personal relations," Julia Shinn wrote.[6]

The Shinns' early years under the Forest Reserve and the General Land Office were not easy years. For all purposes, the North Fork outpost was out of sight and mind in the mountains of immature Madera County. Communications with Newhall and Hermann were distant as well as difficult. Even then the instructions coming down from Washington and Newhall's office were often out of touch with reality. Some times they were ignored completely. In May 1903, newly installed President Theodore Roosevelt visited Globe Rock and the Chiquito Basin as part of an extended visit to Yosemite and California. However, Shinn's scattered records make no mention of the presidential visit.

A year after his arrival the land office instituted a system of cattle-grazing permits on the reserve, which Shinn had to implement. The permits were free the first year but included a small charge for the succeeding years. They were designed to give priority to the small ranchers - the "local folks" - within or adjacent to the reserve, but the whole approach generated considerable opposition. "Even the small owners resented this at first, and the owners of big herds of cattle and many flocks of sheep - men who had brought their flocks and herds to the mountains for years and years, simply did not propose to stand for it. It took years to put that idea over. Many a day our little front room was full of arguing cattlemen, and, of course, all of them were asked to lunch in the mountain way," she recalled.[7]

The following year, the Shinns established a summer office at Ellis Meadow in the hills above

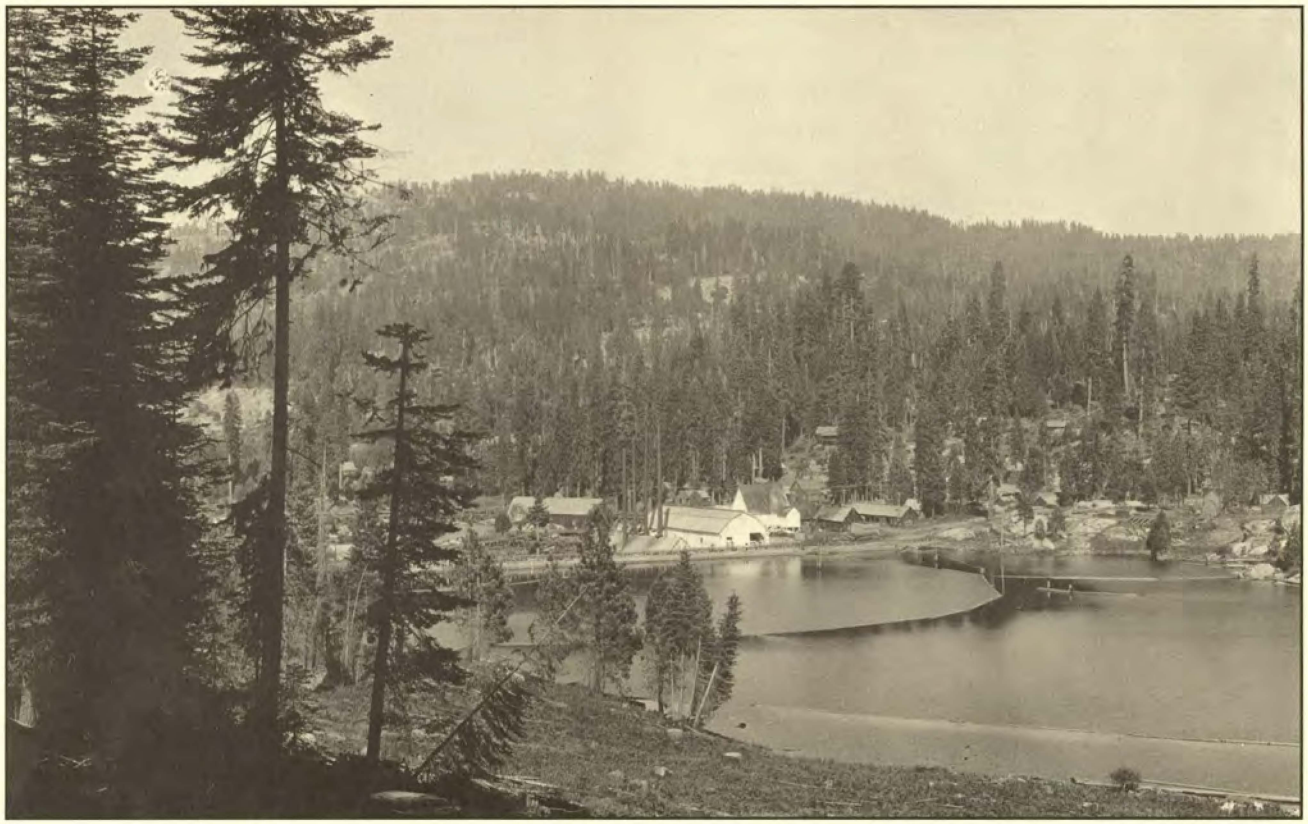
Charles H. Shinn at his North Fork cabin.

Sierra rangers construct the Jerseydale ranger station in the early 1900s, aided by Dolly and Dick, the reserve's legendary work horses.

North Fork. There they became acquainted with writer Stewart Edward White, who had his own cabin in another nearby meadow. In his book, "The Cabin," White provides another perspective of the Shinns' field headquarters. "This particular Forest Supervisor lives three miles from us, under big firs and sugar pines, and before a wide meadow. His headquarters have grown from small beginnings. Here a room has been added, there an office. Gradually the proud living room, in which some years ago we used to sit around a roaring fire, has been overshadowed until now it is used as a store-room. A wide verandah under the roof, or a three sided room - whichever you please - is edged by a tiny bubbling stream. From it rises a stair to a Juliet balcony. The kitchen is entirely detached, and has no roof. Although thus the mistress is likely to acquire pollen and fir needles in her coffee, she also sweetens labour with a sight of green trees, blue sky and yellow sunlight. Beyond, in fragrant azaleas, is a tool-house; across a ravine is a barn. This must be reached; so a substantial rustic bridge spans the gulf. When a thing has been needed, it has been built. The great solemn woods are full of surprises, pleasant ones always. And as the place has grown, so has the community."[8]

Shinn had his work cut out for himself. For the first few years, his skeleton staff of rangers struggled to control unauthorized grazing and suppress forest fires. Although the Organic Act had brought some improvement, the General Land Office remained light years away from the realities on the reserves. In some respects, the grazing controversy remained as volatile as ever. Everyone from the settlers to the Sierra Club was dissatisfied with the land office's inability to manage the reserves. Many observers felt the reserves should be transferred to the Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Forestry, which had been founded several years earlier - but lacked any forests to manage. In particular, the stockmen and settlers urged the transfer, believing they would have a more sympathetic agency with the Department of Agriculture.

Finally, in February 1905, after several unsuccessful efforts, the Transfer Act made its way through Congress; the Sierra and 37 other reserves were moved to the Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Forestry. The move brought major changes to the long-ignored forest lands and signalled a new era of land management. For starters, the reserves were placed under the direction of Gifford Pinchot, one of the early advocates of land conservation and forestry who had been educated in Europe; perhaps more importantly, he possessed a vision as to what needed to be done. No longer would the reserve be "locked up." Instead the resources were to be managed and utilized in a prudent and responsible way.



Two major Sierra sawmills, the Fresno Flume and Irrigation Company and Madera Sugar Pine sawmills, cut enough trees to build a couple of cities the size of San Francisco.

The Original Sierra Stewards

Native American Indians

One of the long-burning issues on the Sierra National Forest is fires, that is, prescribed fires, natural fire or light burning.

Frequently, at the center of the debate has been the native American Indians, the original stewards of the land. The ancient ones used fire to clean the oak woods to expedite the acorn harvest. At the appropriate season, they also burned the forest to remove the underbrush and improve hunting. Yet, they also feared and fought wildfires - the kind that continue to scorch the Sierra even today.

Down the years, the American Indians have made up some of the best suppression crews on the Sierra National Forest.

The "Lewis boys" of North Fork constituted some of the foremost firefighters on Ed Madson's North Fork fire crews -considered by many as the best firefighting crew in the state during the 1930s. Across the canyon, Carl Fuller, another American Indian from the Auberry area, also served for many summers as the forest guard at nearby Daulton Meadows.

Ed Steen of Fresno, who served around Shaver Lake during the 1930s and 1940s, said the Indians from around North Fork and Tollhouse were extremely adept at firefighting and were among the best he knew during his nearly 20 years along the fire lines.

"Before chain saws came onto the scene, the key men in the fire camps - especially for falling those hazard trees - were the tree fallers and saw filers. Ed and Al Benson of the Big Sandy Rancheria were masters at filing saws and dropping hazard trees back into the fire," said the veteran fire guard.

There were others, of course, going back

North Fork Lumber Jennies.

to the days of the "pick-up" fire crews. For many years, the Indians were relegated to ranks of the fire crews - yet they served with distinction.

Over the years, other native Americans have also worked in the forest as loggers and sawmill workers, contributing their time and talent to the heritage of the forest.

The Indian connection to the forest took various turns. Early on, discrimination often limited their contribution to trail or fire crews. Others preferred to work as loggers, so they could be outside and enjoy the natural world of their heritage. For instance, Ulysses Good of North Fork worked as a logger for many years. Among his more memorable jobs was the removal of the trees and vegetation from the Wishon and Courtright reservoirs.

During the post World War II period, the Sierra had a brush piling crew composed of a dozen Indian women from the North Fork area. In this role the "Lumber Jennies" collected and piled logging slash for burning from the timber sales on Peckinpah Mountain and Rock Creek. For one or two years they were a frequent sight in North Fork as they rode back and forth to their work areas in one ton pickups with bench seats in the back.

One member of the crew, Annie Jackson Lewis, had also worked for some of the early Sierra supervisors, including Charles Shinn and Maurice Benedict. In 1993, the 104-year-old Lewis was still reminiscing about the "hot times" the women had burning brush.

In the post World War II period, Ben Charley of Dunlap became a frequent figure on the Sierra firelines; eventually he went on to lead a Hot Shot crew. His father, Albert, was also known for his firefighting ability. His son, Dirk, found the opportunity to move up the Forest Service ladder and works in the Clovis office.

One of the longest tenured Sierrans, Virgil Bishop, also of North Fork, served the forest for 33 years. Before he retired in 1980, he built trails, fought fires and served as a forest guard. As time took its inexorable toll, Bishop put his experience to work in fire prevention - trying to stop fires before they got started. His association with the Forest Service has continued on with his two sons, Virgil Jr., who serves as an engine captain at Trimmer, and Jerry, who works out of North Fork.

Other native American Indians have also managed to break out into other areas of forest management. For instance, Lorrie Planas, district archaeologists, sleuths out the trail of her forbearers, seeking the archaeological sites and artifacts that define the trail of the ancient ones. The Indian legacy and stewardship with the land, air and water continues.

Ben Charley.

Pinchot had been associated with the Bureau of Forestry within the Department of Agriculture since 1898. From the very outset, he had recognized the incongruity of having the reserves within the Interior Department. During those early years, Interior had even deferred many of the forest issues to Pinchot's bureau. He had proposed the transfer to the Agriculture Department. Once the transfer was effected, Pinchot hit the forest running, bringing vision and focus to the fractured force. In many respects he was a driven man. Although born to great wealth, Pinchot sought challenge and commission. As forest historian Harold Steen observed, Pinchot was virtually "obsessed with a drive to achieve," and would chastise himself for relaxing when there was anything to be done.[9]

The direction of the new Forest Service was defined in Pinchot's memorandum to the Secretary of Agriculture James Wilson in 1905.

"In the administration of the Forest Reserve it must be clearly borne in mind that all land is to be devoted to its most productive use for the permanent good of the whole people and not for the temporary benefit of individuals or companies. The continued prosperity of the agricultural, lumbering, mining, and livestock interests is dependent upon a permanent and accessible supply of water, wood and forage, as well as upon the present and future use of these resources under business-like regulations enforced with promptness, effectiveness and common sense. Where conflicting interest must be reconciled, the question will always be decided from the standpoint of the greatest good of the greatest number in the long run."

Sierra rangers move a log into position, as part of a bridge project on the forest. The early rangers were expected to do any of about 60 different jobs.

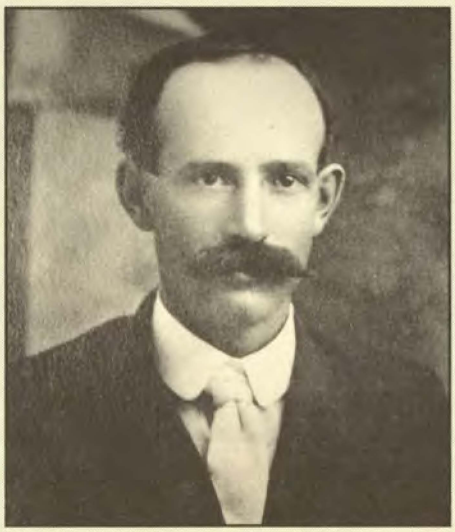
Other changes accompanied the transfer to the Agriculture Department. Regional offices were established, including one at San Francisco, administering all the reserves in California and Nevada. On the Sierra, the "reserve" designation was retained for the time being. Newhall was dismissed and the Fresno office was eliminated. Shinn would become the "Supervisor" of the Sierra North Forest Reserve with headquarters at North Fork. For Sierra South, a supervisor's office would eventually be established at California Hot Springs. On the eastern slope or Sierra East, the rangers would work out of a field office, at either Round Valley or at Independence.[10]

Pinchot's charisma and leadership showed itself almost immediately, reaching all the way to the field. Almost overnight the situation improved, bringing a sense of hope and instilling a new spirit among the rangers. A few additional rangers were hired. A wagon and draft animals were acquired. There was even talk about uniforms. But there were also restrictions and guidelines regarding employment with the reserve. For instance, a ranger could no longer hold another job. Pinchot wanted -insisted - upon a total commitment to the Forest Service.

Shinn was a disciple of Pinchot. The two had first met the previous year during Pinchot's extended visit to California. Shinn had even tried - unsuccessfully - to obtain Pinchot's backing for his Sierra job. In 1905 and again in 1907, Pinchot visited the Sierra Reserve, even "roughing it" at the summer headquarters at Ellis Meadow. Shinn admired Pinchot's conservation philosophy and his efforts and enthusiasm in reforming the Forest Reserve. He also recognized that Pinchot had a sense of mission - and perhaps more importantly - the ear of the President Theodore Roosevelt, who had been thrust into office following the 1901 assassination of President William McKinley. In some respects, Pinchot would make Roosevelt's reputation as "the National Forest President."[11] Shinn also shared Pinchot's perspective to upgrade the professionalism within the forest agency.

Shinn's home, the Peace Cabin, below, served as the main office of the Sierra until the first Supervisor's Office was built in 1907.

Gene Tully: Pioneer Ranger and Diplomat



Of all the early rangers who moved across the Sierra Forest Reserve during its formative days, few could match the likes of Gene Tully.

As a ranger, he set the standards.

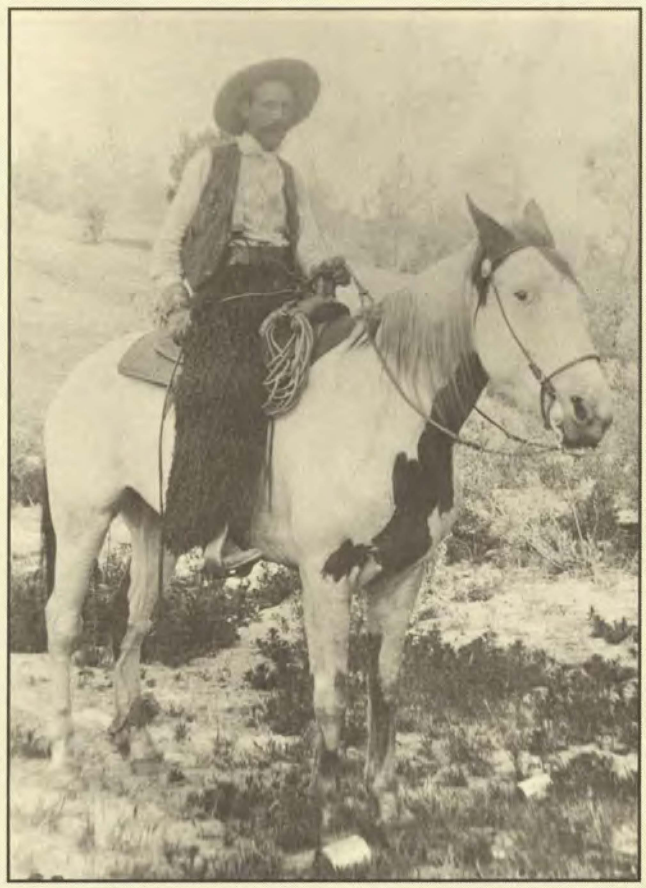
Born near Hollister in 1875, Tully left school at 16 and began working as a ranch hand. Gradually he worked his way across the San Joaquin Valley and toward the Sierra. Around 1895 he and a partner began supplying meat and staples to the sawmills around North Fork - Tully served as the delivery man or teamster while his partner did the butchering.

Despite working seven days a week he was going broke and soon tired of freighting. Around 1903 Charles Shinn, the chief ranger of the Sierra, observed the hard working teamster and his ability to handle animals and asked Tully if he wanted to be a ranger. At first Tully declined but after recurring difficulties with his business he signed on.

The new ranger soon proved himself. As with many of his fellow rangers, Tully was a cowboy, teamster and general handyman. He could do almost anything, whether it was fighting a forest fire, building a mountain trail or chasing trespassing sheep.

In 1905, Tully was put in charge of grazing, a job which required him to make a 600-mile patrol from the Tuolumne River in the north to the Kern River in the south. It was often a lonely ride, a difficult and dangerous job, set in the distant reaches of the High Sierra.

"I issued permits for taking stock to the mountains - how many and where. My area com-



Tully, above, modeled a uniform around 1912

At North Fork landmark, Tully, right, pose with fellow rangers.

prised what is now six counties. This circuit took me about six week in the saddle to cover. The place where I used to rest my animals in the high country is still called "Tully's Hole," he recalled years later.

"On those days I was called the 'diplomat' of the Sierra National Forest. They called me in to settle disputes over grazing rights. I would listen to both sides and calmly suggest a solution to the problem without taking sides. My decision was listened to and my advice followed. It saved a lot of trouble for everyone."

Tully worked for the forest for about 12 years before turning to ranching. But in those 12 years he set a trail of service and dedication that enabled the Forest Service to gain the respect and confidence of the public. He returned for a season or two around World War I, then worked for the Mendocino National Forest in the 1930s.

Tully lived to be a ripe old 97 years, often reminiscing and writing about his days on the Sierra. In 1957, the old ranger wrote a note to Walter Puhn, recognizing Puhn's appointment as Supervisor of the Sierra National Forest.

"Walter, I am going to ask a favor of you. More than 50 years ago I became one of those who took the 'Baby North Sierra' in arms and helped to nurse her through the hard-sledding days. Now I beg, beseech and command you to take good care of her," Tully urged.

Hunting took on a new approach in 1910 when the first motorized sportsman arrived on the Sierra. The auto has gone on to shape forest recreation.

"Through sheer force of personality and conviction, Pinchot drew many enthusiasts into different phases of the forest movement. His vigor and drive captured the interest and loyalty of a number of young men. His detailed knowledge of forestry and his concern for making forestry pay attracted the friendship of many practical lumbermen," another Pinchot admirer wrote.[12]

Pinchot placed the rangers under Civil Service, requiring each prospective ranger to take a written test and demonstrate job related skills. These included riding, shooting, packing stock animals and the use of an ax and shovel. One such test required an applicant to fall a tree - so that it would drive into the ground a stake that had been set in some difficult fall line. When the first examinations were held at North Fork Julia Shinn observed that efforts by some of the applicants to pack a animal with the required diamond hitch were "comical." One requirement may have been even more trying: a ranger had to know how to cook a meal in the field - and then eat it.

Even before the transfer, Shinn had recognized that the reserve could not accomplish its basic mission without a well trained and motivated staff. It was imperative, he reasoned, that if the reserve were to succeed it would need some exceptional, dedicated, hard working field rangers who could work on their own and under the most difficult of conditions. From his initial 1902 tour of the reserve, Shinn could see the difference between the political appointees of the past and the likes of Richard Bigelow, the young 28-year-old ranger who had been hired on a few months earlier by Newhall to patrol the Kings Canyon area of the reserve from Sampson Flat.

Bigelow was a foothill cowboy - a jack of many trades - and by modern standards a "workaholic" - who was ready to do whatever it took to make the reserves work. Bigelow's diary details unbelievable dedication and service during his early days on the Sierra Reserve. Trail work, timber sales, fire patrols added up to 12-hour days, six and seven days a week. In 1902, he led the Sierra Club into Kings Canyon for its second annual outing -noting that the club had many inexperienced members who were ready to set the forest afire. On May 3, 1903, his diary makes a brief mention of the

day's events: "I stayed in Fresno and courted Miss Sara F. Hiatt, who was visiting friends of mine . . . May 4: got married in the morning and attended to Reserve business in the afternoon." [13]

At times, Bigelow literally worked himself sick putting in 16 hour days. In the fall of 1903, while clearing a trail in Tehipite Valley, Bigelow received word from Shinn to report to the reserve's station on the east side of the Sierra. Without a second thought - with no questions asked - the young ranger packed up and rode out. A week later, following a gruelling trip by way of Shaver Lake and Mono Pass, Bigelow and his spent stock forced their way down to Owens Valley. There, at a small ranger station near Round Valley, he was instructed by telegram to take over the east side division and replace the current ranger - a "do-nothing" holdover from Binger Hermann's patronage system. Bigelow also was ordered to get the trespassing sheep out of the Reserve. It was a job easier said than done. At that time, the east side division covered most of the eastern slope of the Sierra to the center of the Owens Valley, all the way from Mono Lake to Mount Whitney and as far south as Tehachapi Pass or about twice as large as today's Inyo National Forest.

The herders, who had long ignored the grazing restrictions, saw no reason to change their grazing patterns just because a new ranger had arrived on the scene. Bigelow along with two assistants went to work, forcing the transient flocks off the Reserve. When they wouldn't leave, his crews would scatter the herds, drawing the herder's ire. Repeatedly he was threatened. As the situation became more tense Bigelow and his men went out armed, often expecting warfare. At Fort Independence, the sheepmen swore revenge against Bigelow and his rangers. "I was to be put in a rock pile as soon as they could get me alone. I was told not to leave town without a bodyguard," he recalled. But Bigelow did not back off. [14]

The situation there had been tense since the preceding year when Ranger George Naylor wounded a sheepman during repeated encounters between the herders and the Reserve rangers. On several occasions, Shinn made his way over to the east side to size up the situation and lend whatever support he could. Early on, he realized that the future of the reserve and its ability to function was dependent upon attracting exceptional people to the ranger force - men like Bigelow - who could do the job. He also realized that such men could often be found along the flanks of the Sierra, among the ranks of the hard-working, self reliant cowboys and teamsters.[15]

Shinn spotted a young, tough teamster named Gene Tully of North Fork. His first attempts to hire Tully were unsuccessful. At that time Tully was in a partnership with another man, furnishing

Fish Camp has come a long ways since the early 1900s, when it roots were tied to logging and mining — rather than tourism.

The first recreational campers began showing up on the Sierra in the 1890s. Their early camps reflected the conveniences of the times.

meat and other supplies to the sawmills and ranches in the area. Despite the fact that he was working himself into the ground, their business was failing. It was against this background in 1903 that Shinn apparently persuaded the disheartened teamster to join the Reserve.

Tully soon proved himself. Along with Bigelow, Charles O'Neal, W.B. "Boot" Taylor and other rangers, he turned out to be another superb choice. Over the following decade, Tully blazed an unbelievable trail of service to the Reserve. He became the ranger in charge of grazing on the entire reserve. For $60 a month he patrolled a range that extended from Cherry River in Tuolumne County all the way to Monache Meadows in southern Inyo County. His 600-miles took six weeks in the saddle and covered some of the roughest and most spectacular country in the nation. The fringe benefits were few and far between. On several occasions Tully found himself head to head with an irate stockman or disgruntled miner. "It was a hard, lonely and sometimes dangerous life. Sudden illness, a fall, weather, slides and the threatened vengeance of a resentful stockman made the early rangers always watchful," Tully wrote.[16]

In between tours, Tully built trails, buildings and fought fire. When he rode into the North Fork compound one day in 1906 he was greeted by Supervisor Charles Shinn with a broad smile. "Hi, Tully, good news! We can stock up on fire tools." With that brief announcement Shinn handed the pioneer ranger a letter from the Forest Service's Washington D.C. office. Tully made some initial congratulatory response and only then opened the letter. After reading the message, Tully turned red with rage, and slammed the letter down on Shinn's desk. After years of pleading for fire tools - and after years of borrowing rakes and shovels from North Fork friends - Shinn had been "authorized to spend $2.50 on fire equipment."[17]

"Now, now Tully, they don't understand our conditions here yet," Shinn responded, trying to placate the frustrated ranger. After much pressuring from the rangers, the Sierra managed to obtain its first "fire wagon" around 1907. It had some fire tools and was pulled by a span of good horses, "Dolly and Dick."

The fire season showed its hot head in the

Sierra every summer. Shinn's wife, Julia, observed that from mid-July to October "the dreaded fire season" posed the most trying period for the Forest Service, even for the rangers' wives. On occasion, the wives found themselves in the heat of battle, a borrowed shovel in hand.

"Then indeed we knew we were of use. Men had to hurry to the scene of action. It sometimes devolved upon us to load the kyaks for the pack horses who followed, and to do up rolls of bedding, to saddle our own horses and ride for additional helpers. If a fire were alarmingly close, we even fought fire. Most often we cooked and cooked. If the fire were at all near, we made up beds for relays of exhausted men, and we made gallons on gallons of coffee to be carried in canteens along the fire lines. And afterwards, we helped our tired bosses to make out their fire reports, to estimate the loss in timber and forage, to reason out cases and to plan better ways to fight fire next time," she recounted[19]

Around 1906, Tully teamed up with Rangers Ray Tyler, Mal McLeod, and Boot Taylor and Supervisor Shinn to sell 160 acres of pine and fir from the Miami District near the Sugar Pine Mill - one of the first authorized timber sales on the Sierra Reserve. Working out of an old logging camp, the timber cruise was done in March amid snow, hail, rain and fog.

"First, we ran the boundary survey through thick bear clover and snow brush, waist high and water-soaked. The crew was wet to the skin and then some. Mal swamped for the compassman, and I, as lead chainman, had to drag the big dumb ox Taylor through the bush. He was not content to lay down but he let his number 10s drag. The louder I abused him the louder he would laugh," Tully recounted. The nights were long and cold, and Tully acknowledged that there were times when they violated regulations and kept themselves fortified with whiskey.[20]

The fickle weather of 1907 proved to be another adversary. In the fall, Tully barely escaped the high country after he and two helpers were caught by an early-season storm in the headwaters of the San Joaquin River. Dispatched originally to relocate the 1870s French Trail that ran up the canyon, Tully was subsequently redirected to find and remove a band of trespassing sheep from the reserve. Near the Minarets, however, his patrol was caught by a major snow storm. Unable to retreat, the group forced their way into Yosemite National Park, eventually escaping to Yosemite Valley after fighting their way through 3-foot deep snow.[21]

Somehow, Tully managed to survive his numerous close calls to become something of a legend on the Sierra. His sense of humor carried him through several adventures. Recognizing the inadequate pay, the dangers and the working conditions, Tully once asked another ranger, "What is this foolishness all about?" His co-workers knew him as an outstanding ranger and mountain man. After his departure from the service, one of the high Sierra meadows where he used to graze his horses became known as Tully's Hole - a place named for eternity for one of the Sierra Forest's finest. Years later, in reminiscing about his ranger days, Tully observed that the Forest Service was a "disease - there is no cure for it except to shoot the victim," he quipped.[22]

"Gene was one of those great rangers, a wonderful woodsman," recalled M.A. Benedict, who arrived on the forest in 1909. "In the early days before the forest was in agriculture, he and others fought the trespassing sheep, and it took real courage to face those superb mountain men and make them take their sheep out of the forest. They tried just moving them out at first and suing them for trespass, but the usual fine was no more than a grazing fee and the sheepmen just laughed at the rangers; but then the rangers tied up the sheep dogs and gradually dropped off a few head of sheep as they took sheep out of the mountains, so that by the time they had reached the boundary of the forest they were shy about half the herd. That hurt the sheepman and they soon gave up."[23]

Early on, most of the pioneer Sierra rangers were hired on an "as needed" basis and then were released at the end of the summer or fire season. By 1910, however, about a dozen had managed to gain year-round appointments, which they soon discovered involved a little bit of everything. As pioneer custodians of the forest their work often went to extremes. Bob Beard, who passed the ranger examination in 1907, spent his first winter constructing Forest Service buildings on the Shinn property, and stringing the first telephone line toward Fresno

Logging trains pushed their way throughout the timber stands of the Sierra during the early 1900s, as seen on the Chowchilla Mountains.

Flats. The following spring he moved over to District Ranger Mal McLeod's Mariposa District. There the young cowboy had the thrill of his life, trying to rid the range of wild horses - and discovering another aspect of rangering.

"First we built a high wire and brush corral along a trail used mostly by the horses, also put up a rope snare on other routes which proved helpful if we got there before they choked to death. No one would claim them until we caught them. Then they all had owners. We caught, killed and ran out of the country approximately 65 head; on a Sunday we would take about six head to Sam McFarland's corral and ride them. It worked out I drew the most straws, anyway it was lots of fun. I kept myself in saddle stock just for breaking them to ride.

"The winter of 1909 a camp was established at the Hogue Station. One mile of road was built to connect with the Crane Valley road, using ranger labor. Joel Crane, Jack Rea and Bluford Taylor - three veteran rangers, Delbert Booth, Dan McLeod, Billie Brown, Creston Booth and myself were the crewmen. The work was done by hand. Later we built two log bridges at the head of Bass Lake . . . and a trail to Chilkoot Lake. I was assigned to the Mariposa District for three months in Ranger Joel Westfall's place, where a ranger was not very welcome, but I came out alive and had only one set fire."[25]

Beard moved over to the newly created Minarets District in the summer of 1910, where a district office had been established at Clover Meadow. One day Shinn came out to inspect the new facility. After a brief tour the two men headed back down the trail. Shinn had planned to go on to Ellis Meadow, while Beard was headed toward the compound. Although Beard offered to accompany his boss, Shinn declined, saying he knew the way through the forest. After the two parted, Shinn apparently became confused and wandered off the trail, ending up miles away from his intended destination. Hoping to obtain a better view of the surrounding landscape, he rode out onto a rocky promontory. His horse stumbled and slid into a rocky ravine. Although Shinn managed to slide off his horse uninjured, the horse came up lame, preventing further travel, forcing Shinn to spend the night in the open. The next morning, as soon as it was realized that something had happened, a search was launched for the missing supervisor. Shinn was

soon found and the welcome news was "flashed" to the Shuteye lookout, which then relayed the good news to Mrs. Shinn by the phone that had recently been installed. [26]

Over the years Shinn - with his wife's approval - hired other outstanding rangers and staff personnel. Together, as a team, they persevered. Gradually their joint management brought new ideas and approaches to the fledgling, cash-poor organization. Over time the reserve compound grew. Shinn's rangers had built the first headquarters building on the Shinn's property, using lumber that had been cut from their own trees, and had been cut into lumber at the local sawmill. Later, they built a storehouse, blacksmith shop, carpenter shop and some small cabins for the rangers - without anyone ever questioning the propriety of building government facilities on what was essentially Shinn's private property.

The new office building lent identity and credibility to the reserve. At that time forest management remained ill defined, with each new advocate or expert seeking to advance the forestry issue one step higher. In the spring of 1906 Shinn also organized what was known as the first ranger convention at the North Fork facility, bringing the distant rangers together to advance their knowledge and understanding. His first efforts to convene a ranger's workshop had been discouraged; some Washington officials had the mistaken idea that it would serve as the gathering point for some kind of labor union among the ranger staff, Shinn noted. When the week-long convention finally got under way, nearly two dozen rangers were on hand. The get-together proved to be highly successful, drawing recognition and encouragement from none other than Pinchot himself.

"This is the first meeting on a reserve as large as yours and I am anxious to see your reports on the result," Pinchot said by way of a telegram to the group. [27]

"I wish you would say to your men that it means something to be a Sierra ranger and that it is their duty to maintain the standards of a force which has furnished more officers in charge than any other in the country.

"No one realizes better than I the hardships and sacrifices necessary in this work and how in large measure the work itself must be the compensation, but when one stops to think of all that may be accomplished in the next 20 years, it should be a matter of pride for any man now in the Forest Service to think that he is taking part in the introduction of forestry in this country."

Reports of the convention indicated that three rangers from the east side of the Sierra were unable to attend the convention because they couldn't get over the snow-covered Sierra. The convention became a popular annual event. The following year the wives of the rangers also came along

Ellis Meadow served as the summer headquarters of the Sierra National Forest. Many forest greats, including Gifford Pinchot, made their way to the early outpost.

The Sierra hosted the first national Forest Supervisors meeting at North Fork in 1908. Charles Shinn stands second on the left.

and added to the after hours barbecues, campfires, songfests and other social events. As it grew in popularity and size, it helped the agency build an esprit de corps. It also added to the service's stature in the North Fork community. It was so structured that on the final night of the convention, the entire community was invited to the barbecue and dance.[28]

Over the years, rangers like Bigelow, Taylor and Tully became legends in the Sierra. In many respects, they were the "men who matched the mountains of the West." In many cases the rangers were still only seasonal, $60-a-month employees, required to provide their own horses, without uniforms or fringe benefits and charged to do an impossible task. The ranger's job also increased as the size of the reserve had grown. In 1905, President Theodore Roosevelt had approved a change in the boundaries of Yosemite National Park.[29] As a result 335,530 acres along the eastern boundary of the park - the fabled Minarets and those lands within the headwaters of the San Joaquin River - were transferred to the Sierra Reserve after miners and stockmen convinced Congress to take that land out of the park and make it available to them. That addition with subsequent executive orders had caused the reserve to grow from 4 million to nearly 6.6 million acres during the Shinn watch.[30]

In 1906, with Pinchot's management emphasis of opening up the reserves, the grazing policy underwent a marked change in directions. As his philosophies and enthusiasm spread across all the national forests changes were made. Instead of allowing the livestock to roam and drift, each stockman was compelled to drive his animals through a control area, where they were counted. From there they were moved on to a designated or allotted range, which ushered in some of the first special use permits on the reserve. [31]

"The chief expected us to be supermen. He wanted everything done at once. Protection of the national forest from fire had to be airtight. Trails and fire lookouts and ranger stations must be located. The sheep and cattle grazing on these mountain pastures must be brought under federal permit and their numbers reduced to the estimated carrying capacity of the range. Pending land claims were to be investigated. Mature timber must be cruised and its sale and use under controlled cutting begun wherever possible. We must show the people of the West that the national forests were for use; and we must show Congress their possibilities as producers of federal income," observed William B. Greeley, who eventually became Supervisor of the nearby Sequoia National Forest.[32]

That same year Pinchot, Shinn and a group of foresters gathered at a forested site on the north fork of Stevenson Creek, not far from the giant Fresno Flume and Lumber sawmill at nearby Shaver. The record is not clear but Greeley may have been one among them. There, Pinchot sized up a stand of towering pines. He picked up an ax, and approached one tree and carved the initials "US" into its bark. The chief forester then moved over to another mature tree and repeated the process. He did the same to some similar sized trees. While history did not record his exact words, Pinchot set out what was to become the guiding principles for government forestry: take only the marked trees, the overripe, overmature trees so that younger trees can grow and sustain the harvesting process. "Standing timber must be marked US near the ground so that every stump will show the mark," Pinchot later wrote into the manual which set forth forest practices. "Where snow may conceal the markings from cutters, each tree must also be marked at a point several feet from the ground."[33]

As Pinchot, Shinn and other supervisors attempted to gain control of the forests, Congress complicated the matter by passing the Forest Homestead Law of June 11, 1906. While the measure was aimed at opening agricultural lands to public entry, the real objective was to get a piece of valuable government timberland that could be sold at a handsome profit. Originally, the authors of the measure sought to redress some of the problem that had arisen out of the creation of the reserves, where some of those with legitimate claims were denied access or found themselves with no neighbors. But, in many instances, the measure simply opened up the federal lands to more abuse. Unlike the Swamp and Overflow Act, which saw almost all of the major meadows of the Sierra fall under private ownership, the Forest Homestead Act's greatest impact was to push the western boundary eastward, paving the way for such communities as Fresno Flats and Coarsegold. While the forest had a large number of applications, many were denied because the Sierra had comparatively little land where elevations were compatible with agriculture.[34]

Besides wildfires, Shinn's major problem of that time involved W.H. Crooks, a pioneer cattleman from Ahwahnee, who continued to flout the grazing regulations year after year. As a long-time stockman, Crooks refused to live by the terms of grazing permits that permitted him to take 250 head of cattle onto the reserve near Grizzly and Iron Creek ranges. Even after his permit was revoked, the stockman continued to use the range. Shinn was stymied in the case when the United State Commissioner refused to issue an injunction against Crooks. Shinn saw Crooks' defiance as a threat to the permit system and warned Washington. "Other cattlemen are watching the case and say if Crooks is allowed to graze 200 or 300 head of cattle without paying the fee, they will do so next season."[35]

Crooks pleaded his case all the way to the President. Shinn took his response to the U.S. Attorney, asking that he issue an injunction forcing the veteran stockman to conform to the reserve's regulations. The controversy raged on for nearly two years before Crooks conceded, finally agreeing to pay twice the normal grazing fee for his intrusions, and to maintain better control over his herds. The resulting decision had a widespread impact in the area between Mariposa and Fresno Flats. Slowly Shinn and the new Forest Service began to get control of the reserve.

When Pinchot, the "chief forester," came back to the Sierra in the summer of 1908, fire suppression became one of the main concerns. The dis-

Sierra ranger uses a Biltmore stick to scale tree.

cussion continued after he and Ranger Gene Tully slipped away from the main party and spent a couple of days camping together in the back county near 77 Corral. There in a relaxed, friendly setting the Eastern forester met the Sierra ranger. Rank and formalities were set aside. Tully relegated Pinchot to "just ranger Pinchot" - and the chief accepted the temporary "demotion."

After dinner, "ranger" Pinchot got stuck washing the dishes while Tully looked after the horses. As Pinchot began preparing his sleeping spot, he hauled out an air mattress - something Tully had never seen before. "I sat watching, curious and uneasy, fearing he would blow himself up . . . his lung tester. Finally he asked me to try it out and see how I liked it." Tully complied and found the air mattress quite comfortable. Tully couldn't resist the opportunity to respond. "But ranger Pinchot, don't you ever send a lot of these out here. If you do, every ranger you have will get up only every other day, and maybe not then," Tully jokingly told the chief. [36]

But gradually the campfire talk got around to more serious subjects. Pinchot explained his plans for fire control, including lookouts, emergency food and tools, telephones and rapid transportation for suppression crews. Tully talked about lack of manpower, fire tools and other needs that never seem to have any funding. In addition, the ranger from the school of hard knocks wanted to discuss something he had never been able to openly discuss with Shinn: light burning. As a young teamster, Tully had seen how the Indians around North Fork had burned the oak woodlands to improve the acorn harvest - the so-called "Injun(sic) burning." He had also seen what some of the more careful stockmen had achieved with limited burning in the higher conifer forests. Such an approach would remove some of the heavy fuels and keep the forest more open, thereby encouraging tree growth. Pinchot listened but didn't say much. The next day they rode back to North Fork, and Pinchot went on his way.[37]

Some time earlier, Shinn had been informed that the Sierra Forest Reserve would be reorganized into more manageable administrative units - something he had been working on for a long time. Ever since 1899, the sprawling reserve had been loosely identified as Sierra North and Sierra South, using the Kings River as a dividing line. Shinn's report in a Fresno newspaper suggested these new units would probably be known as Mount Whitney Reserve, which would be formed out of Sierra South; the Sierra North or just plain Sierra Reserve Forest; and Inyo Forest Reserve, comprising the eastside division.[38]

Sierra National Forest Recon Crew, 1910.

By the time the recommendations made their way through the bureaucracy eighteen months later, both the names and makeup of the new reserves of the forest were different. In what was known as the "big reorganization" of 1908, President Theodore Roosevelt established a Sequoia National Forest of 3 million acres; spun off another 210,000 acres of the northern tip of the Sierra to form the larger Stanislaus National Forest; created an Inyo National Forest of 1.3 million acres; and a Mono National Forest of 111,239 acres. The separations had the effect of reducing the Sierra National Forest to about 1.7 million acres.

Across the country the expanding system of national forests brought still other changes. The first professional foresters had emerged from the Yale School of Forestry. In 1908, also, supervisors from throughout California gathered at the North Fork compound to hold their own convention, coming together for the first time to discuss mutual problems and concerns. Supervisors and their deputies from all over the state arrived - including Bigelow, who had gone on to become Supervisor of the Tahoe National Forest. The meeting marked a milestone

in the evolution of the Forest Service. In less than a decade, an organization that had been lost in the wilderness became focused. With that transformation came a new vision with new mandates. As the art and science of forest management emerged, the supervisors saw the need for better trails and roads, and improved communications. But most of all they realized the need for a service comprised of well-educated, trained individuals who could lead the service into a new age.

As a measure of the change new regulations were evolving that were designed to provide some measure of control over logging operations. In 1909, Shinn rode over to Shaver Lake to inspect the "new harvesting of timber" under the Forest Service's newly imposed regulations. The old teams of oxen for skidding the logs to the mill had been replaced. Instead, a steam powered donkey engine was in place, snaking the logs over greased skidways. He saw the new guidelines as a "striking object lesson" in responsible logging. Shinn was quoted in the Fresno paper "The company that has lived up to the thought-to-be-unbearable law, had made money and is now operating a mill, McKenzie No. 1, in conformation to the new regulations, and it is known that the company is not going to let any contract under the new regulations go by. It has to be a practical way of preserving the forest."[39]

Increasingly, forest management was becoming more demanding and complex. That same year Shinn also tried to respond to the disgruntled stockmen who were losing animals on the forest's rangeland. In order to verify the losses claimed by the cattlemen, the Supervisor ordered a survey. The total losses amounted to 245 cattle or about 2 percent of the animals on the range. Only three cattle were killed by predatory animals. The remainder died from starvation, disease, poisonous plants, old age and calving. Shinn found that mountain lions had killed about 125 pigs, with the bulk of the losses occurring near the southern boundary of Yosemite, where mountain lions were protected. In response, Shinn suggested that they spend $360 to hire a lion hunter - even though he was not in favor of hunting.[40]

In his report, Shinn recommended that the number of animals allowed to graze on the forest be increased from 10,000 to 12,500, or 25 percent. This increase could be accommodated, he said, because some of the damage caused by sheep had been repaired and because new ranges, like Tamarack Meadows, had just been opened. The following year, the Forest Service informed the stockmen that they would be charged 30 cents for each head of cattle grazing on the forest from June 1 to October 31.

In many respects the Shinn years were accompanied by outstanding developments, recognizing that the Sierra's budget for 1909 was only $32,265.67. Despite the problems that marked his final years, Shinn represents something of a forest visionary. He foresaw massive recreational use of the national forests, and called for a system of trails and other facilities to accommodate those who would be coming to the forest.

"The old Kearsarge Trail should be built to a better grade and made four feet wide from end to end. The Paradise Valley and Middle Fork country should be opened. The old Piute Pass Route, the Mono Trail to Inyo country and the old French Trail and the Mammoth route should also be restored. This, the finest tourist country in America, can take care of 20,000 to 40,000 people every summer . . . The forest has a plan. All that is needed is more money."[41]

Similarly, he anticipated the day when the forests and parks would be administered by college-trained specialists. "Whether you called them parks or forests, the administrative districts by which the citizens of this republic learn to protect and manage these forests and mountains will more and more come into the hands of specialists, before whose scientific training the difficulties of the period will disappear. At the present in both parks and reserves, the work itself is often the only training . . . In time we can reach out and obtain first class men who have had ample preparation," Shinn said.[42]

Chapter Three

Hydro Power Sparks the Sierra

Of all the various forces that have shaped the destiny of the Sierra National Forest, few have generated more power - and lasting change - than that which came with the development of hydroelectricity.

Shortly after the creation of the forest reserve in 1893, John Eastwood, a young civil engineer from Fresno who was engaged at the Fresno Flume and Lumber Company's sawmill at Shaver, observed the deep canyon of the upper San Joaquin River. Recognizing the potential the canyon held for hydroelectric development, Eastwood began dreaming. At that time the generation of electrical energy remained a little known force, far removed from the forest management. With the exception of two or three small low-head generating plants across the country, electrical generation languished in its infancy.[1]

As Eastwood took a second look at the canyon he began planning. Additional field trips were made into the deep gorge. These surveys confirmed everything he had seen earlier - and more. From his perspective the San Joaquin River canyon could become the cradle of hydroelectric development in the United States. The elevations and the water supplies were mountainous, he discovered. After further inquiry and planning, the adventurous Eastwood began casting about for backers who could help develop his revolutionary plan. One of those he contacted was John Seymour of the Fresno Water Company. Together they organized the San Joaquin Electric Company and began selling stock to raise the necessary capital. Seymour served as president while Eastwood became vice president and chief engineer.

Finally in 1895, after many technical difficulties - and after apparently obtaining written approval from the General Land Office - the construction of their San Joaquin No. 1 powerhouse began.[2] Eastwood's plan centered around a generating plant that would be located on what was then known as the north fork of the San Joaquin River - today's Willow Creek. At a point high above the main canyon, the water would be diverted into a high pressure penstock, which would turn the blades of the turbine in the powerhouse, 1,400-feet below. In many respects Eastwood was breaking new ground, using pressures that have never been utilized before. Critics charged the design was unproven. In particular, they held that "the head," that is, the 600-pound water pressure created by the 1,400-foot drop, surpassed any available equipment or known technology. Others questioned his plan to transmit the generated power to Fresno, some 37 miles away. They charged Eastwood was putting "hope before reason" by tackling two major problems with unproven, premature technology. Time would show that the project was not without its problems. Even the indomitable Eastwood acknowledged that "everything was experimental and those connected with it sheer novices."[3]

A year later, after many difficulties, San Joaquin No. 1 began generating power, drawing nationwide attention and admiration for its progressive engineering and development. Despite its initial success, the company soon ran into trouble. Two drought years coupled with the loss of its water rights to its main competitor, the Fresno Gas and Electric Company, caused Eastwood's company to fail. Without a back-up source of power, the company was forced into bankruptcy in 1899. Despite

Hydro Power Engineer John Eastwood powered dramatic change on the Sierra.

their setback, neither Seymour or Eastwood were through. Shortly thereafter, Seymour began reorganizing the electric company into the San Joaquin Power Company, and arranged for the construction of a dam at Crane Valley, the original Bass Lake dam of 1901.

Although Eastwood was not affiliated with the reorganized company, he remained committed to the potential of the canyon -and the future of electricity. Shortly thereafter Eastwood launched a new search of the forest reserve, looking for the right combination of topography and hydrology. What he envisioned was a chain of hydroelectric facilities of an even grander scale. Between 1896 and 1899, Eastwood roamed the upper San Joaquin River basin, calculating the stream flows and elevations, seeking out the best generating sites. The young engineer gradually focused in on the Big Creek drainage, a tributary of the San Joaquin River. What emerged out of these surveys was to define Eastwood's engineering genius - bigger and bolder - by a quantum measure. His new plans involved a vast system of reservoirs and tunnels, where the descending water would be diverted into one powerhouse after another as it dropped down the canyon - so it could be used again and again. Of Eastwood's exploration, historian William A. Myers observed, "This was an exploration saga unique in the annals of early power development. With only a string of horses and pack mules to carry his equipment, the indomitable Eastwood alone explored the rocky gorges and watershed of the region." [4]

Determined not to lose these water rights, Eastwood kept them secret under the cover of his "Mammoth Power Company." For several summers, he returned to the mountain canyons, calculating the average stream flows and selecting dam and powerhouse sites. By the fall of 1902 the enterprising engineer was ready. Approaching William G. Kerckhoff, a Los Angeles developer affiliated with the Pacific Light and Power Company - the predecessor of today's Southern California Edison Company -Eastwood wrote: "It gives me great pleasure to inform you that I have completed the survey for a tunnel line to the junction of Pitman and Big Creeks, and I can place before you the most remarkable power project yet presented."[5] Kerckhoff could also see the potential, and Eastwood was soon placed on the company's payroll and began preparing final plans. When those studies were completed in 1905, Kerckhoff turned to business financier Henry Huntington, who was also attracted to Eastwood's plans, perhaps by its sheer size and daring. Thus was launched the ambitious Big Creek project, the largest hydroelectric facility of its time -and one that would make the San Joaquin River Canyon the cradle of hydroelectric development worldwide.

From the onset of hydroelectric development the General Land Office and then the Forest Service had a problem in licencing those early projects. In 1901, for instance, Seymour of the reorganized San Joaquin Power Company was arrested at his Fresno office by federal authorities for not having secured the necessary permits to build his new storage dam at Crane Valley.[6] In court Seymour testified that he had applied to the General Land Office for permission to build the Bass Lake dam, but -apparently - the application had never been acted on. Believing that it would eventually be approved, he went ahead with the dam project - to his eventual regret. Similar legal battles

developed on the Sierra Forest Reserve involving smaller hydro projects on the Kaweah and Kern rivers.[7] On the Kern - not unexpectedly - the dispute triggered another exchange between Binger Hermann and Charles S. Newhall, with Herman demanding Newhall investigate the trespass of the reserve by the Kern River Company.

Although it was sheer coincidence that the arrival of the hydroelectric age coincided with the creation of the Sierra Forest Reserve, it gave warning that federal land managers would have to deal with private individuals and companies who wanted to utilize government land to generate power or form other commercial ventures. At that time there was no established procedures for reviewing something as new and revolutionary as hydro projects - let alone an agency that would serve as a clearing house for such projects.

The dawning of the hydroelectric age also ushered in a whole new world. When work on Eastwood's Big Creek project, the San Joaquin River Hydroelectric Project, finally got underway in 1910, the General Land Office and the Sierra Forest Reserve were history. As construction moved forward, the enormity of the project became apparent. At that time it was the largest construction project in the world, rivaled only by the construction of the Panama Canal. While applications were made to the Forest Service for a permit, Shinn, now under pressure to resign, apparently forwarded the application to the regional office, where it was passed onto Washington D. C. What happened next remains unclear. At that time, the Forest Service relied on the standard "Use Book" that gave only limited instructions for the construction of commercial power plants. Those guidelines specified only that the construction of dams and reservoirs be subjected to the approval by the supervising engineer of the Reclamation Service. It was years later that Huntington, the money man behind the project, acknowledged that he had started the giant project with only a preliminary permit, and that it wasn't until 1913 - after the first phase was completed - that a final permit was approved.

Early on Shinn had warned Pinchot of the need for the service to develop a simplified licensing system for hydro projects on the national forest. In 1907, he wrote that the large power monopolies..."have surveyed and estimated all the power in this forest, and have filed on most of it. They expect to reservoir and use the whole watershed of the Sierra Nevada, with as little payment as possible, and with no attention to the broader demands of higher civilization for outdoor life," Shinn noted. "All the power companies have secured their privileges for power plants, rights of

Despite some early problems, Eastwood's San Joaquin No. 1 generated some high powered changes on the Sierra Forest Reserve.

The Crane Valley project has undergone several changes since it was first established in 1901. This 1908 photos show work on the second dam.

way, etc., to allow for future enlargement. In many ways these are obscure and often dangerous to the welfare of the forest."[8]

But other changes were coming to the Sierra National Forest beside hydro power. For despite his vision and leadership, Shinn was beginning to generate negative reactions around North Fork. By the end of the decade he had become difficult to work with. His increasing deafness rankled some of the rangers; although he had learned to read lips, it was often difficult to get his attention so he could do that. His energies and enthusiasm had waned with the years. The Supervisor had become more forgetful with time. Rangers who had been assigned to build trail one day, were castigated the following day for doing that very work. Shinn's once fatherly lectures had turned into "tirades" or harangues, where he went to great length to complain about some petty detail or minor infraction. To many he was a "wonderful man, or not at all wonderful," but an eccentric "literally romantic." The prevailing opinions include "something of a scholarly man, a dreamer or a teller of tales, but underneath everything else, abound in kindness and humanness." [9]

The final years of Shinn's supervision were marked with controversy. The details of the hydroelectric permits were time-consuming and difficult. The paper work associated with the Forest Homestead Act also was getting to him. At one time the Mariposa Grand Jury tried to have Shinn removed from office, claiming the Supervisor was "dictatorial" and had fraudently denied grazing permits to some ranchers. An investigation was conducted by the regional office, and while it concluded that Shinn was honest he had indeed made a mistake. He was accused of being unorganized, inefficient and going to any length to deflect criticism to others. Other complaints were also heard of the supervisor. Madera County officials accused him of usurping their authority by administrating outside of the forest boundary - all the way to the bars and saloons of North Fork. If Shinn was not a teetotaler - he was at least a sworn enemy of the North Fork taverns, figuring they had contributed to the inordinate number of fires that had occurred in and around North Fork. It was also alleged that Shinn had been using the service's horses to plow his own beloved orchard. Against these allegations an internal investigation was ordered. In July of 1910, Associate Forester H.F. Potter informed Pinchot's successor, Chief Forester Henry S. Graves, that the service

was "going backwards" with Shinn and it should consider asking for his resignation.[10]

Increasingly, the rangers were turning to Julia Shinn for direction. In 1908 she had finally been recognized for her abilities and years of service, and was hired as a "temporary clerk" at $1,000 a year. The question of her status or nepotism never surfaced. By then it had also become evident that she was more organized than her husband and she began to assume more and more tasks. In the last years of his supervisorial post, she was recognized as the "de facto supervisor."[11] While he drew mixed review, everyone seemed to love Julia Shinn. On numerous occasions Ranger Gene Tully described her as the "finest" woman he had ever known - and who had been "gypped' by having Charles Shinn as her husband.

Julia Shinn's self assigned "supervisorial duties" went well beyond service. For many she was "Our Forest Mother" who helped the service gain public acceptance around North Fork. Repeatedly, she went out of her way to help newcomers become part of Forest Service community. It seems she was always at the ready, cooking, helping or offering suggestions or encouragement during those trying years. In 1911, at Ellis Meadows summer headquarters, Julia Shinn served as the midwife when she assisted the wife of ranger James Tompkins give birth to a daughter; the summoned doctor didn't get there until the next day.[12] In many ways, Julie Shinn gave birth to what could be the service's most cherished institution, the concept of the "Forest Service family."

Near the close of 1911 - almost a decade after his arrival -and amid growing pressures from the regional office - Charles Shinn relinquished his job as Forest Supervisor. "Increasing deafness and the lack of technical training necessary to carry on the scientific work of the Forests" were cited by historian John Lewis as the main reasons for Shinn's resignation.[13] A family friend blamed the regional office for his departure - but acknowledged that there were two sides to Shinn's departure. In some way Tully also contributed to Shinn's resignation by assisting in the investigation. Despite what many might have taken as a demotion or insult, Shinn remained true to the service. Perhaps the veteran Supervisor realized that he had done all he could and now it was time for someone else to move the organization forward.

First completed in 1913, the Huntington Lake dam was raised in 1917 to impound more water and increase electrical generation.

Julia Tyler Shinn

Sierra Forest Mother

A woman's place was in the kitchen or classroom, so Julia Shinn had been told.

But Julia Shinn found her place in the Sierra National Forest as the wife of Charles Howard Shinn, the first Forest Supervisor. She also found a place in the hearts of all those she touched, particularly the young rangers who came to North Fork during the heyday of the Sierra Forest Reserve.

After converting a dilapidated old cabin into a home as well as the supervisor's headquarters, she put their "Peace Cabin" on the Forest Service map. After "volunteering" as office clerk for several years, she was finally hired on as a "temporary clerk" at $1000 a year in 1910. Even after her husband left his post, she continued on until 1923, counseling and advising young rangers and succeeding Supervisors. As such she became the de facto supervisor of the fledgling forest.

Gene Tully, one of the original Sierra rangers, described Julia Shinn as "the finest woman I have ever known." Another ranger, Richard Bigelow, who went on to become Supervisor of the Inyo and Tahoe national forests, said that everything he learned of value came from her.

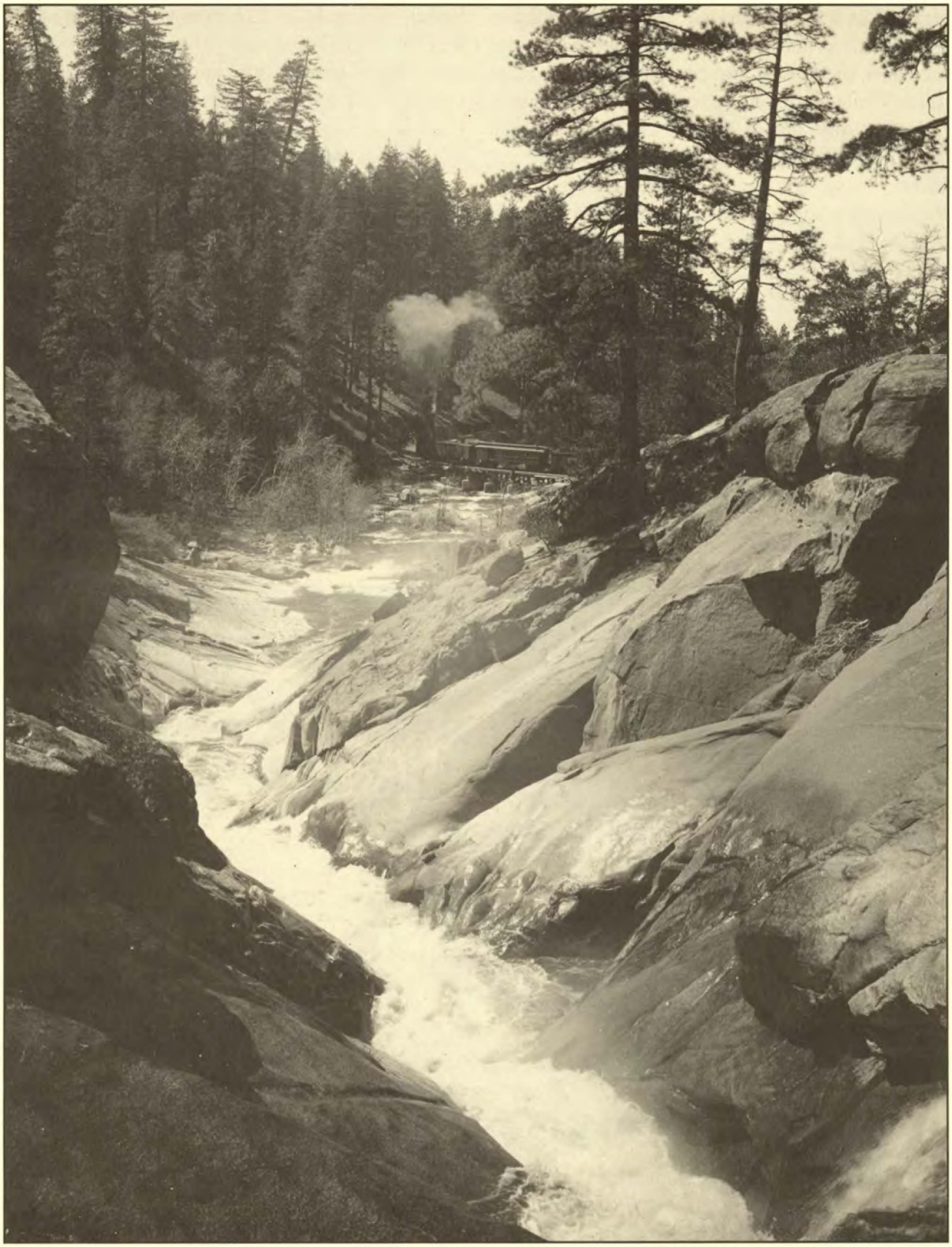
In many respects she made the Sierra National Forest what it is today, setting both the foundation and the spirit for the organization.

Julia Shinn was a legend in her own time, but the grand lady's long trail came to an end in 1956, when she died at age 88 at Ukiah.

Her passing brought forth a mountain of memories and eulogies. "She was an early day forest clerk and the Supervisor's wife - the friend, adviser and counselor to every man, woman and youngster on the Sierra Forest for over a quarter of a century - the wellspring of the 'Sierra Spirit' that continues to this day -the never to be forgotten Mother of our Forest," observed forest veteran Frank M. Sweeley and Maurice Benedict.

"All who worked on the Sierra during the first 25 years of this century experienced the influence of Mrs. Shinn and were the better for it. She helped us write our reports, encouraged us in our new ideals, patiently guided us to what was right. She helped prepare our grub lists for pack trips and looked after our families when we were gone for weeks in the back country, advised our wives about our babies - yes, and helped bring some of them into this world. She recruited men for fires and cooked for them too. A valiant woman of high intelligence, she was dedicated to the service, and often put the problems of others before her own, and came up serene even when her own world seemed to fall apart.

"The days when the Forest Service was young and feeble, but strong in spirit have gone. But the service forever will be indebted to Julia T. Shinn, whose strength of character, courage, wisdom and just pure goodness left such a deep and lasting impression on all who knew her...," they wrote.



Stevenson Creek tumbles down the mountain - as a San Joaquin and Eastern Railroad train heads down the line.

In recognition of his service, Shinn was retained as a Forest Service "examiner" or information officer and writer, continuing to espouse the cause of forestry and prudent forest management. While his departure was somewhat strained, it did not overshadow Shinn's impressive record of accomplishment. In some ways, the "literary romantic" went on to receive greater recognition as a writer than as a supervisor. Julia Shinn continued to serve as an office clerk at North Fork until she retired in 1923.[14]

Upon stepping down, Shinn received widespread recognition for his contribution to the Forest Service. "You have, through your writings taken an effective part in spreading the message of forestry . . . Largely through your efforts alone, hundreds of California editors have given their readers something of your love for the forest and a more intimate knowledge of the forests' place in human progress," wrote W.B. Greeley, chief forester.[15]

Sunset magazine noted that the Sierra forest had seen numerous accomplishments during Shinn's tenure. Many of his rangers had made their way up through the ranks to become Forest Service administrators. "His enthusiasm for and devotion to his work in the Forest Service were an inspiration to every man, old or young, who came in contact with him. His forest was a training camp for Forest Service officers. To each and every man under him he imparted his own enthusiasm and love for forestry, an enthusiasm they never lost. To have served under him on the forest gave a youngster in the service a standing equal to any B. A. degree ever handed to a college graduate. 'One of Shinn's men' was enough endorsement for any forest ranger seeking advancement in his chosen profession," the magazine reported.[16]

As the veteran Supervisor looked back on his years of service he could point to numerous accomplishments. In a January 8, 1911, article in the Fresno Morning Republican, Shinn listed his most important accomplishments as getting con-

On a steep hillside above Big Creek, construction workers align sections of penstock in 1912.

Workers set forms on the Florence Lake Dam during the 1920s, utilizing the multiple-arch design of pioneer hydro engineer John Eastwood.

trol of the illegal grazing; opening the forest to regulated uses with an improved network of trails and roads; and winning over the mountain settlers. The latter, he wrote, had been done by "hard work by the rangers in suppressing fires and building trails and a little public relations in the form of country dances, cattlemen's rodeos and turkey shoots."

Under Shinn's "watch," the Sierra National Forest had passed through its formative years. He had taken the confused reserve and turned it around, giving it new direction and mission. Under his guidance, the Sierra had established the first fire lookout on Shuteye Peak. A forest insect expert had been hired to work with other national forests. A specialist in forest fungi was also breaking new ground. In addition, Sierra crews were also collecting seed from select sugar and yellow pines, which would be used to reforest the burnt-over lands. In less than a decade, the Sierra had grown from a forest of one officer and a handful of part-time rangers to a force of 10 officers with a staff of 25 line rangers and clerks, located at six offices. The rangers had built trails, fire lookouts and other facilities, including a bona fide supervisor's office - on Shinn's own property. At one point Pinchot recognized Shinn's accomplishments and the Sierra's successes, "It has also graduated as officers to other forests, five supervisors, a number of district rangers and a forest specialist. No forest in America has developed a finer body of men more thoroughly in accord with all their officers or more a part of the community in which they live," he said of Shinn's Sierra.[17]

If water and hydro power constituted the dominant force shaping the forest, fire, particularly forest fires, were not far behind. Since the late days of the forest reserve, fire had become a powerful force behind forest management. Yet ever since that time, the Sierra seemed to be fighting a losing battle

with wildfires. The continuing increase in the forest use, brought on by new settlers and visitors, had been responsible for some of the increase in fires. Sparks from the "new logging equipment," the steam-powered donkey engines and the Shay logging locomotives, also had set off additional fires. So had the growing number of campers and hunters who heated up the scene. For Shinn, fire was the service's "number one enemy." As early as 1908, he had begun keeping tab of the number of fires and the acreage burned. The fire season of 1908 was a hot season, when 30 fires burned 23,050 acres. 1910 was another bad fire year.

At the end of 1911, Paul G. Redington moved up from the deputy position to take over for the departing Shinn. Redington was a true forester, one of the first of the so-called "technically trained" people to come out the Yale School of Forestry. After joining the service in 1903 he had made several quick moves to associate district forester at Denver, Colorado. Redington had arrived on the forest a year earlier against a background of great anticipation - and with some confusion. While Shinn was no longer supervisor, his wife Julia continued to serve as office clerk and "mother" to the young rangers. Even those in the district (regional) office acknowledged that it posed an awkward situation for Redington.[18]

As the potential of hydroelectric power became known the demand surged. More and more developers were turning to the national forests for power generating sites. By 1910, the Washington office had become something of a clearing house for these applications. In that year alone, the Forest Service reported that 171 preliminary permits had been issued nation-wide - with 10 of those covering the Sierra National Forest.[19]

On the forest itself, the new supervisor observed that the construction of the Big Creek project was well underway and the activities of the developers were consuming more of the rangers' time. "The wagon road built by the power company from Auberry to Big Creek will be completed by December 2. This company is exceedingly active now and it keeps many busy here looking after their wants. At present they have three parties of engineers in the field making a preliminary survey for a railroad. Such a line might connect at Gordon Switch, or it may be built clear into Fresno. However, it seems almost certain that Auberry is to have a railroad," an early edition of The Sierra Ranger reported.

Despite his imposing credentials, Redington received no respect from wildfires either. Having served as Shinn's assistant, he recognized the need for more and better fire-fighting

During the peak of construction on the Florence Lake and Ward Tunnel, dog teams were used to supply the snowbound work camps.

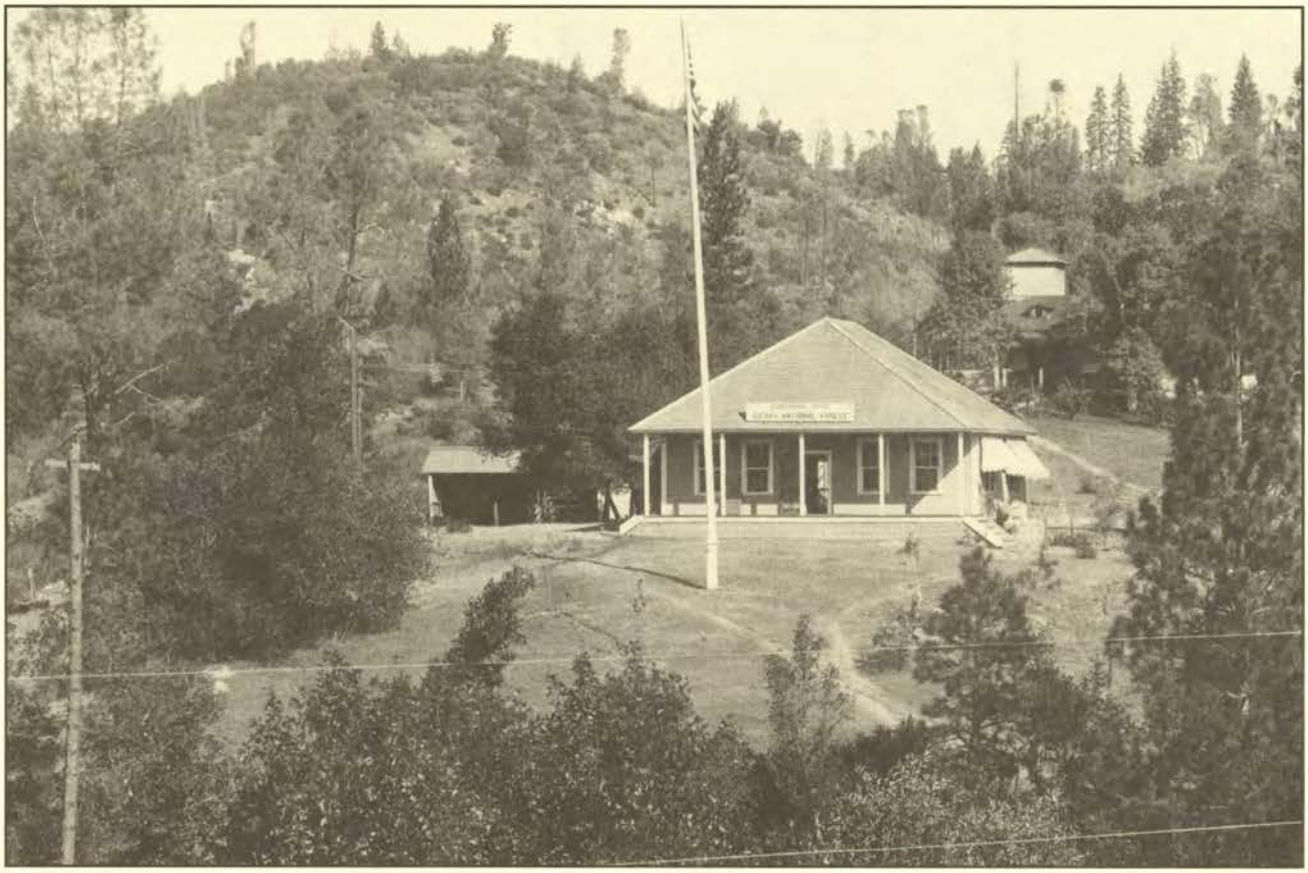
Participants in the first and only Sierra Winter Carnival try out their skis and snowshoes during the 1916 outing at Huntington Lake.

training and preparedness. While funding had improved from the days of the reserves, it remained woefully inadequate to meet the ever increasing demands that the national forests across California were facing. Around North Fork, Redington gradually gained good marks as forest supervisor. Articulate and friendly, he was approachable and a good communicator. He was fair and firm with his growing staff; his main thrust was to upgrade the ranks of the ranger staff.

Redington was particularly fortunate in having the assistance of Maurice A. "Ben" Benedict, an even more likeable ranger who had arrived at North Fork in 1908 and risen to the rank of assistant supervisor. Along with clerk Julia Shinn, Redington was soon able to move the forest beyond some of the problems that had arisen with Shinn's later years.

Tully and the other rangers looked to Redington to assist the service by obtaining the manpower and equipment that the service needed to meet the new decade. In particular, they thought Redington might be more effective in getting the long-needed firefighting tools. At that time the total forest budget was only $40,000 a year.

Redington soon set his own agenda. He authorized the building of guard or ranger stations at Trimmer, Dinkey Creek, Auberry, Mariposa and at Ockenden, near Shaver. He also made plans to develop a new supervisor's office on government property on a site that had been acquired below the Shinn Ranch. During Shinn's tenure, no one had questioned the propriety or legality of building the original 1907 supervisor's office next to Shinn's Peace Cabin - on what was Shinn's private property. By 1910, however the need for a new government site had become obvious, and the section of land just south of the Shinn Ranch was acquired. Before the site could be developed a bridge was needed to span Willow Creek, thereby providing easier access to North Fork. Shortly thereafter, work was begun on a new supervisor's office, to be known as the Bridge Building. In effect, this was the third such office to be established in what would eventually become known as the North Fork "Compound."



The 1912 construction of the Bridge Station marked the first time the Supervisor's Office of the Sierra National Forest had been located on government land. The three-room facility served as a North Fork landmark for several years.

At peak construction, thousands of workers were involved in the Big Creek hydroelectric project - requiring the tenuous placement of some work camps.

The Sierra entered the 20th century around 1913 when the first horseless carriage came onto the scene. At that time, the district office had obtained a Tin Lizzie, a Model-T Ford, to inspect the lands affected by the Forest Homestead Act. It took about three more years, around 1916, before the next "horseless carriage" chugged into the North Fork compound - a used pickup truck - complete with fire tools and other firefighting equipment. To go with the new fire truck, the regional office saw the need for well-trained and equipped firefighters - rather than dragging in questionable men from the streets and saloons of North Fork.

Other changes had also shown up on the forest. Several of the rank-and-file rangers had acquired uniforms. In 1912, The Sierra Ranger noted that about half of the staff was wearing uniforms. However, the rangers had agreed among themselves that there would be no compulsory requirements to wear uniforms at that time. "The men themselves are no longer prejudiced against a uniform. The day is near when there will not be a voice raised in protest against a proposition to making wearing of a sensible uniform compulsory," one ranger speculated.[20]

The early rangers wore many occupational hats as well. About every time they turned around they found their jobs taking on new responsibilities. Often they found themselves out on a limb - far beyond the requirements set forth in the ranger's

Sierra Ghosts

Vanquished Ranger Stations

Much like those they once served, the old buildings of wood and canvas that formed the early ranger stations on the Sierra National Forest are gone, having returned to the earth from which they came.

In their day, these early outposts were islands in a forest of wilderness, offering aid and advice to the pioneers and pathfinders. They were inhabited by real people, who did their thing and then stepped back into the folds of time.

These first stations were established on the premise that they would be located no more than a two hour horseback ride apart - in case of a fire or other emergency. Then the telephone and the automobile came along and changed that.

Down the years the forest has seen a long line of ranger stations. In some cases the very names that once marked the location have faded from the land. In other cases, we suspect, the stations were the homes or ranches of those early rangers - with a flag out in front. Rancheria, Big Sandy and Auberry suggests the location, but where are the remains? The likes of the Oak Flat and Usona stations stand no more. Kelty Meadows, Mill Flat and Chowchilla have also vanished from the scene. In at least one case, the old "Thermal" station has been moved to the higher ground of Trimmer to make way for Pine Flat Reservoir.

At Mono Meadows, the old station that District Ranger Frank Price built back in 1915 stands silently, sheltering the memories of those bygone days. Yet if its ghost could talk, the crumbling structure could surely tell some tall tales of those who gave of themselves to help guide the Sierra through its founding days.

At some unknown location, a group of Sierra rangers rally around one of the early canvas stations. Circa 1912.

civil service examination. One of the rangers detailed his sundry duties and came up with a list that embraced 60 different activities.[21] For example, following a big January 1914 storm, the Italian Bar bridge over the San Joaquin River - the main route between North Fork and Shaver - was swept away. Facing a forced 55-mile detour through Friant, Redington turned to the regional office for assistance. With contingent funding of $350 the rangers went to work, scavenging and improvising. Within a month, they had a replacement span in place. When the cost-accounting rangers added up the replacement costs - at a time when "cost overruns" were unknown - the total cost came in at $348.[22] Their job description took on another dimension later that year when the rangers were authorized to serve as game wardens and sell fishing and hunting licenses for the California Department of Fish and Game.

If the rangers found their responsibilities increasing so did Supervisor Redington. Increasingly, he found himself talking to cattle ranchers, timber operators or power companies, seeking assistance in brush burning, fire suppression or other forest activities. Well versed in public relations, Redington realized that the only way the money-strapped Forest Service could function was to seek outside assistance. His schedule indicated that one day he was meeting with the Southern Sierra Cattlemen's Association, discussing ways to reduce the impact of cattle on the meadows. The following day found him in Fresno or Madera, tweaking the supervisor for assistance on roads abutting the forest. Another time he was in San Francisco, seeking potential allies for construction of the proposed John Muir Trail.

If the Shinn supervisorial "watch" constituted the formative years, then Redington's reign might be described as the progressive period. During his tenure the Sierra forest underwent dramatic changes. To accommodate the state's growing numbers, rangers were issuing more special use permits for grazing and timber sales. At times the Sierra and a few other national forests were generating more money than their annual appropriations. As the money came in, Congress directed that part of the receipts should be returned for roads and schools where the grazing or timber harvest had taken place.

Apparently Redington was an avid angler and mountaineer. On numerous occasions he would ride or hike off to some distant point on the forest, alone and unaided, just to talk to campers, hikers or other forest visitors. On still other occasions he and his wife would make extended trips into the back country to inspect what would become the

Workers put the finishing touches on the Mono-Bear siphon in 1927, marking another milestone in the hydroelectric developments on the Sierra National Forest.

Completed in 1915, the Huntington Lake Lodge served as magnet for the man-made reservoir during the hey-day of power development.

High Sierra Primitive area. "He probably helped the Forest Service coin the phrase 'stream surveys,' meaning that he was out on the forest checking up on the fishing," observed one North Fork veteran.

As an admirer of the high country, Redington also became an advocate for the proposed John Muir Trail - as well as other trails on the forest - both for recreation and utilitarian purposes. When the State of California approved $10,000 for the construction of the trail in 1915, both the Sierra and Sequoia national forests got behind the project since most of the route -at that time - lay within their boundaries. Not only did the Forest Service agree to manage the work, but it contributed the services of its officers without charge. Two crews went to work on the Sierra that first summer, completing a vital bridge at Piute Creek and the south fork of the San Joaquin River. "The Supervisor, district foresters and rangers got enthusiastic over the project and achieved remarkable returns from the modest budget," wrote one observer.[23] Redington's enthusiasm was moderated by the realities of the work, however. "The task of overseeing the packing of powder, steel, supplies, etc., over difficult mountain trails, and of handling men, the best of whom grow sick and tired of the isolation and monotony of camp life 50 to 75 miles from civilization, is no small one and requires a lot of patience and tact," he noted.[24]

Everywhere Redington turned he saw the need for new facilities or expanded services that would improve access across the forest. During his stay on the Sierra, the forest's trail system took a giant leap forward. Early on his office reported that 34 miles of new trail had been constructed and 163.25 miles of old trail had been repaired.[25]

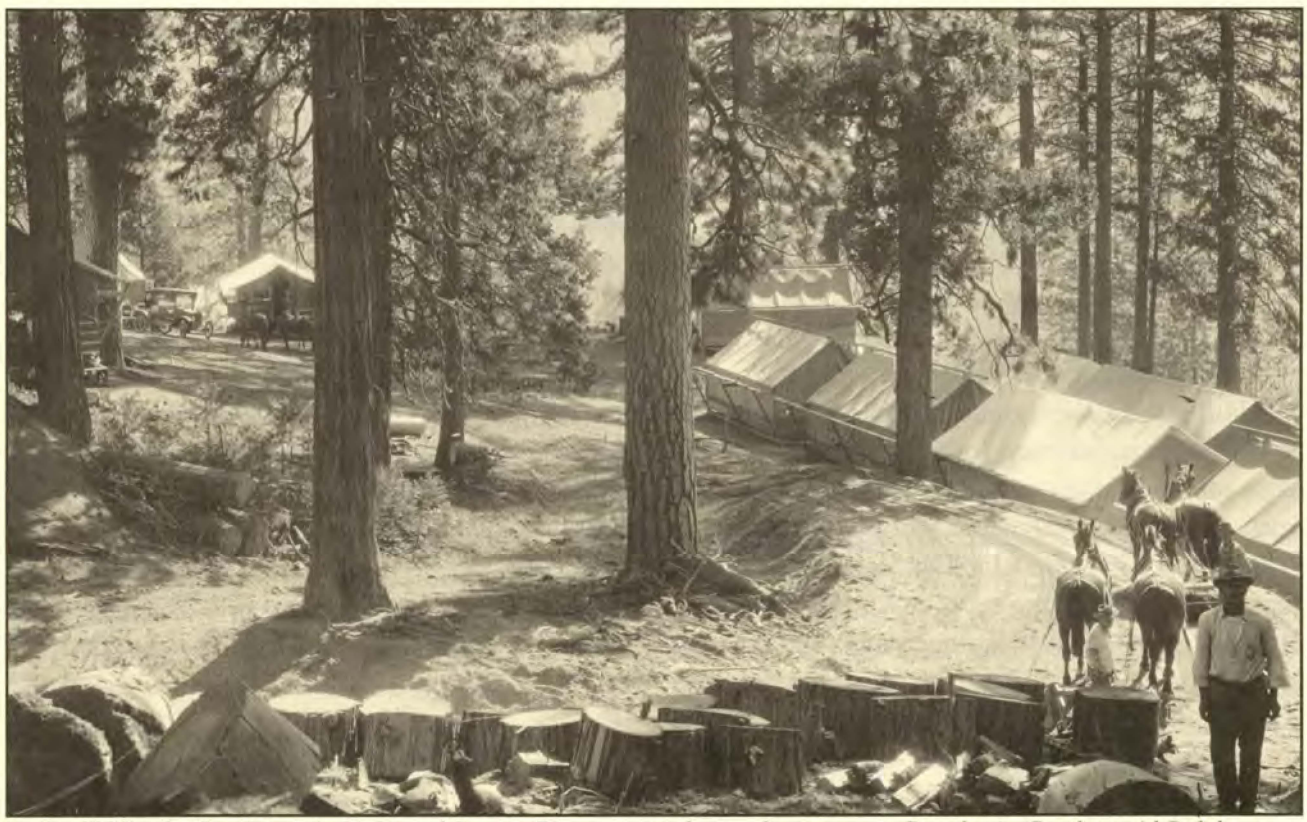
New rangers meant new quarters and new stock - and more tools - whether it was for firefighting or construction. Redington also approved the installation of a cable and car at the stream gauging station on Dinkey Creek, which could be used to measure the flows during high water time. "This will be appreciated by campers also who wish to cross the creek on foot during the high water time, as some of them would have had a cold swim last Spring had it not been for Ranger Price and his extra saddle horse."[26]

In a separate but sad event, the Sierra forest lost one of its staff members in July 1914, when Louis Margolin, a timber cruiser, apparently drowned while trying to ford Dinkey Creek. In tracing the tragedy, the rangers reported that Margolin failed to meet with a timber cruising unit near Ross Crossing. A search was launched but his body was

never recovered. Today a small bronze plaque on a nearby boulder marks the spot where the first Sierra employee died.[27]

By that time the Big Creek project was well along. The San Joaquin and Eastern Railroad - sometimes known as the "Slow, Jerky and Expensive" - had reached Big Creek. The man-made reservoir known as Huntington Lake had also been completed. To meet the increasing number of administrative problems there, Redington had established a ranger station at Cascada. In November, 1913, Big Creek No. 1 Powerhouse began generating power. Other units followed. With the reservoir and railroad in place, the recreating public was not far behind. In July of 1915, the Huntington Lake Lodge was rushed to completion to accommodate a large Fourth of July turnout. Once in place, the guests engaged in canoeing, fishing, hiking and organized games, such as croquet and tennis. Since there was no road around the reservoir at that time, supplies and guests had to be ferried across the reservoir in rowboats. In short order, the trips across the lake on moonlight nights were breathtaking, and gained rave reviews. To add to the ambiance, the boat often towed a barge that provided picnicking and dancing. Although the season for such activities was short, Huntington Lake soon acquired an unrivaled reputation as a mountain retreat.[28]

The lodge became the scene of yet another new activity the following winter, February 1916, when 80 members of the Fresno Commercial Club staged the first Sierra Winter Carnival. After taking the train to Big Creek, the participants traversed the final eight miles to the new lodge in horse-drawn "snowboats" or Sierra planes, delighting in the wintry wonderland. Skiing, snowshoeing, tobogganing and something known as "snow tennis" highlighted the week-long activities. A tongue-in-cheek set of rules were adopted, all designed to compliment the outing. "Lessons on the latest dances, the snowshoe trip, the ski flop, the coyote lope, the rattlesnake wiggle and the chuckawalla wallop can be obtained on application to the management." Talk of World War I was discouraged. "Parties of guests who wish to discuss the war will leave daily at 3 a.m. for Kaiser Crest, another for King George Peak, and the third for Hell Hole."[6]



In the 1920s, the San Joaquin Light and Power Company used a work camp near Rancheria Creek to aid Balch power plant development.

Single men were cautioned about "designing women," noting that the carnival coincided with Leap year. While there was no direct Forest Service involvement, the winter games gave warning to Redington and his rangers of things to come.

Along with the hotel, the Forest Service began issuing permits for summer cabins, signalling a new era of summer recreation on the forest. Ranger Frank Price reported that the response to the cabin site program forced the service to open additional tracks to meet the demand. Hiking, camping and other forms of recreation had taken its place on the forest early on. The push to build the John Muir Trail reflected a growing interest in back country recreation. About that time, Price was appointed to head up the newly created High Sierra District. At Mono Meadows, not far from the hot springs, where the native American Indians had long gathered, he and a ranger known only as Clark built yet another ranger cabin - providing the first known permanent structure in the "unexplored" area of the forest.

Higher education arrived in 1916, when Fresno State Normal School joined the rush to Huntington Lake and opened a summer school there. Some time earlier, at the request of the college president, a young teacher from the college had been asked to scout out the site for a summer campus in the mountains. Several sites were studied, with Huntington Lake coming out on top. "I returned thrilled with the idea of taking over an old abandoned logger's camp. On my recommendation, plans were laid, and by the latter part of June we had completed the necessary preparations for the summer session," wrote Edith Redinger. For much of the next 25 years the Huntington Lake summer school represented the peak college experience for 250 or more students each summer. In an outdoor classroom under the trees, the students learned about nature firsthand. College Rock became a landmark. Extended burro trips were run back into lakes around Kaiser Peak. Over the years, Forest Service personnel became involved in the school, lecturing about the flora and fauna of the area.[30]

As World War I swept across the world, the demand for electricity skyrocketed, prompting the call for more generating facilities. Within three years of its completion, the network of dams creating Huntington Lake were raised to increase the storage and generating capacity. At the same time, Eastwood's dream of an integrated generating system was pushed ahead. Final engineering plans for Florence and Shaver lakes as well as more powerhouses were moved forward as the second phase of the Big Creek project got underway. The Sierra National Forest was about to produce more power.

Early on the Forest Service had come under fire for not processing the applications more readily. Although the Sierra was leading the hydro movement, many of the other forests were experiencing similar delays and difficulties in processing the necessary permits. In an obvious overstatement of the facts, one industry promoter went out of his way to predict the "demise" of the industry because of the government's inability to process the applications. The entry of the United States into the war forced the issue, bringing additional pressure to expedite the process -and move the licensing away from the Forest Service. Finally in 1919, the chief engineer of the Forest Service, O.C. Merrill, recommended that a commission be set up to oversee power development on the public lands. His recommendation resulted in the passage of the Federal Power Act of 1920 and the creation of the Federal Power Commission. Composed of the secretaries of agriculture, interior and war, along with four members from outside of government, the commission was empowered to promote power generation and decide whether a dam and related power facilities should be built. Merrill was appointed the executive secretary of the commission. Within five months of its formation, the commission was deluged with applications for power projects. Since the commission had no staff, the Forest Service stepped into the void, lending its expertise and staff.[31]

Chapter Four

Fires and World War I

Over the past century the Sierra National Forest has been ravaged repeatedly by wildfires. Audie Wofford, who grew up in North Fork in the 1890s, knew what fire could do to the foothills and front country of the Sierra. On April 1, 1905, he joined the Forest Service, after having taken the first Civil Service examination ever given in California. After serving as a fire guard for a year the young Wofford was promoted to ranger in charge of the North Fork District.[1] For Wofford, the basic mission of the Forest Service was fire prevention and suppression - fire control. By many measures he reflected Shinn's basic philosophy toward wildfires - they were the No. 1 enemy of the forest. Throughout his 37 years of service on the Sierra, he regarded wildfire as "warfare" - to be suppressed wherever and whenever it showed its fiery head.

Wofford recognized that early detection and early suppression were the foundation of fire control. "Get them early when they're small," became his byword. For some time, he noted, the rangers had been using a rocky pillar east of the Peace Cabin to scout the distant horizons for telltale plumes of smoke - a promontory that became known as "Sight Rock." But a higher and more encompassing observation point was needed, Wofford recognized. In 1907, he and another forest guard, J. Clyde Welty, began scanning the forest from the 8,358-foot summit of nearby Shuteye Mountain during the fire season. "We both would climb Shuteye Mountain, taking water and lunch, leaving camp at Brown's Meadow at 7 a.m. and returning at 5 p.m. There was no trail up Shuteye Mountain at that time. The first week, we both climbed the mountain, studying the country by the map, then we took turns about - one would go one day, the other the next, and the other would work on trails in the vicinity." During that first season four fires were picked up by the summit lookout, demonstrating its value. As a result, a trail was built to the summit. In the following two years lumber was packed up the trail and a crude shelter was constructed, and the first lookout in the Sierra was established. The Sierra Forest had pioneered another step.

On other national forests in the West, Wofford observed, rangers often used an "observation" or lookout tree, relying on a standing but delimbed tree. Climbing steps - the same spikes used to climb utility poles - were driven into the trees. Then two or three times a day or during a known fire emergency, an appointed lookout would climb the pole and scan the surrounding forestland for signs of smoke. On the Sierra, a ranger would often ride out to Lion Point, which afforded a commanding view of the upper San Joaquin River basin and much of the surrounding drainage. Wofford observed that the Shuteye lookout proved so valuable in early detection of wildfires that additional lookouts were soon proposed for Signal Peak, near Wawona, and on Bald Mountain east of the Shaver millpond.[2]

The Shuteye lookout proved its worth in 1910 when it picked up many wildfires. Nevertheless, the Sierra experienced its most costly fire season to that time when fires burned 10,364 acres and did $8,371 in damage. When the 1911 fire season arrived, new fire rules and regulations were posted throughout the forest. Burning was prohibited and camping restricted. The rangers noted that the new restrictions touched off another wave of resentment from the livestock men who had been around for years and had burned and camped as

A 1909 fire burns through the timber on Hogan Mountain. Nearly a hundred years later, wildfires continue to dog forest management.

they pleased. "A ranger's badge became a red blanket to a bull to many of the old-timers who had been monarch of all they survey," veteran Ranger Tully noted. However, the 1911 fire season was comparatively mild; of 39 recorded fires, 28 had been spotted by the four established lookouts.

Years earlier Shinn had recognized every great mountain fire emphasized two important things, "The need for more trails, bridges, high lookouts, telephone lines and ranger camps; and the necessity of solving the brush problem."[3] The need for adequate and accurate maps was also underscored. Another problem centered around notifying and dispatching fire crews once the telltale smoke had been observed. In the era before telephones, Shinn's rangers experimented with signal mirrors, or "heliographs," which the supervisor had obtained from the Army as surplus. Later on Shinn even simplified the flash code, trying to improve communications. The main disadvantage of the heliographs was their limited use; they wouldn't work if the sun wasn't shining or if the smoke from the fires obscured visibility.

There also was the problem of appropriations for any kind of fire tools. For some unknown reason, the Washington office refused to acknowledge that there was a need for fire tools. Many of the rangers, especially veteran Gene Tully, couldn't understand why the Forest Service was reluctant to provide sufficient tools, the most basic necessity for protecting the forest. He was convinced that Shinn knew that the rangers were using personal - or even borrowed - garden hoes and axes to fight Uncle Sam's fires. Early on, Shinn preferred to ignore the situation, not wanting to irritate his superiors in Washington. The $60-a-month rangers couldn't afford to feed themselves and their horses, let alone buy fire tools. "Washington had not furnished a tool nor a dime with which to which to buy (them)," Tully added.

In the summer of 1907, fate intervened when the Supervisor was forced onto the fire lines

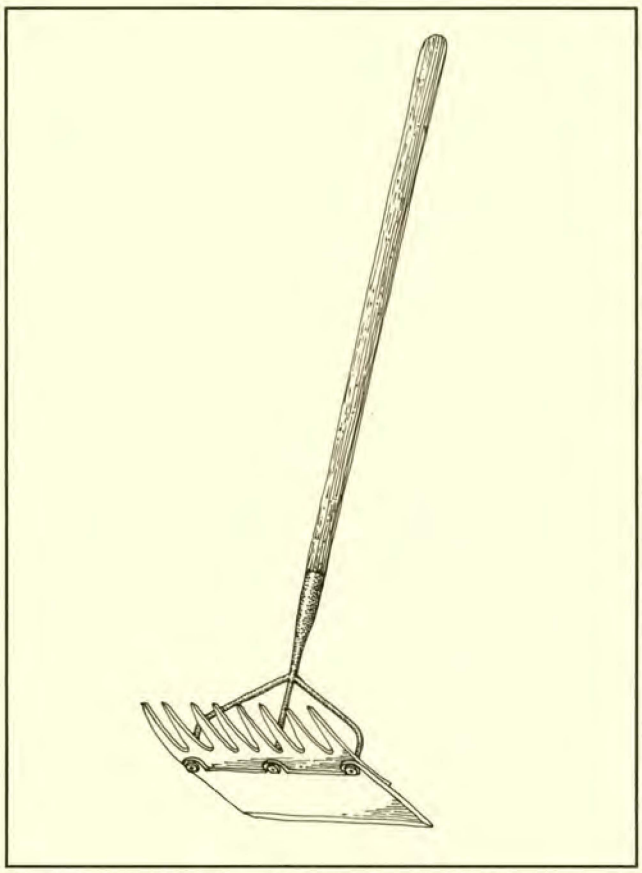
- as happened in those days. When the aging Shinn experienced "the loss of a mile or more of hard-earned fire trail, he himself helped dig, he began to realize the serious situation and began to press Washington for funds to purchase some fire tools," Tully related years later.[4]

Often wet burlap bags were pressed into the battle; while satisfactory for grass and range fires, they were useless in the brush and trees, where a fire line had to be dug. Finally, in desperation, a couple of rangers tackled the fire tool problem head on. Turning to the blacksmith shop at the North Fork compound, Rangers Mal McLeod and C.W. Gray fashioned a combination hoe and rake from a couple of pieces of flat iron. In what was to become another Sierra first, the two men designed a strange looking tool that was a heavy-pronged rake on one side and a hoe on the other. Although it was comparatively heavy, "the McLeod" could be disassembled and carried on horseback. Over time it gained widespread acceptance. For some of the rangers the homemade fire tool became "our first 'bulldozer.' " Thus the first McLeod fire-fighting tool was born - one that would evolve to become a favorite with generations of firefighters to come.[5]

Meanwhile additional lookouts were going up, both on the forest and on two or three promontories located along the boundaries of state lands, such as Deadwood Peak near Fresno Flats - which was becoming known as Oakhurst. Elsewhere on the forest, a growing collection of district offices, ranger and guard stations were going up. Originally, the staff felt it was important to have some kind of guard or ranger station located within 15 miles of one another - or about a two-hour ride apart -to help respond to any emergency.

Progress was arriving on the forest in other ways, also. A major accomplishment was the arrival of telephones on the forest. By 1912, Redington noted that there were 50 miles of Forest Service lines and another 200 miles of lines belonging to the lumber companies, the power companies and the Bigelow Telephone Company, all of which provided an excellent system for reporting fires. Despite their often unreliable performance, the expanded communications went a long

Sierra fire camps of the early 1900s afforded few luxuries beyond canned beans and coffee.



The 1912, Sierra-born, McLeod fire tool, although modified several times, remains in use today.

way in improving the reporting of wildfires. Using a line that the Fresno Flume and Lumber Company had established between its Shaver sawmill and its Clovis finishing mill, the Forest Service took a giant step forward. "For the first time in its history, Ockenden is today hearing the welcome jingle of the telephone bell. The line was completed yesterday to the Forest Service headquarters near Shaver. From there the connection is made with the Fresno Flume and Lumber Company's line to Shaver," the Fresno Morning Republican reported August 2, 1911. The next major effort will be to connect the Sierra with the Stanislaus Forest," the Sierra Ranger observed in 1912.[6]

For the three previous years, ranger crews had been stringing lines throughout the forest, hanging the single line conductor on trees or, at times, on a rocky promontory. A year later, 1912, the service began experimenting with some so-called "portables," signalling the welcome end for those rangers who had trouble learning the heliograph flash code.

Following the disastrous 1908 and 1910 fire seasons the Sierra became more concerned about fire. The rangers experimented with light plows, spray pumps and fire extinguishers - and about anything else than might cool the scene. A lightweight field telephone known as a "cavalry buzzer" was pressed into the battle. The Sierra Forest also was working with the Stanislaus Forest on the use of heliographs. At the same time the Forest Service had secured assurance from the Fresno Flume and Lumber Company, the Madera Sugar Pine Company and The San Joaquin Light and Power Company that they would establish their own fire suppression organizations, and those units would work with the service in preventing and suppressing fires.

The Sierra Forest also went into the "motion picture business" in 1912, when the Edison Moving Picture Company arrived at North Fork to make a training film on fire suppression. Sections of the film, "Forest Fire and How It is Fought," were made at Shaver Lake, where the Easterners were introduced to the rugged West. "Six men of the Edison Moving Picture Company came to Shaver on October 11 and were quartered for the night in the newly completed Shaver Station barn. They were not pleased with the setup," the Sierra Ranger reported. Although the details are lacking, the Sierra suppression crews apparently staged, that is, ignited a fire, so the film crews could capture smoke and fire with the camera. Eventually the film was reproduced and sent around the country as a training tool for other forests.[7]

With the arrival of the telephone, the Sierra discovered the advantages and disadvantages of modern communications. To a large extent, the heliograph and its vexing code could be relegated to the scrappile. But breaks in the single conductor line forced the rangers to 'ride the line' and patrol for breaks. Having been suspended in the trees instead of on standing poles, the telephone line was readily susceptible to falling branches and failures.[8]

Even with the telephone, the fire scene remained critical. As Redington and District (regional) Forester Coert duBois reviewed the costly fires of that period, they began to smolder. They realized that they needed a more systematic approach

The arrival of the wood-fired locomotives and donkey engines triggered many of the wildfires on the forest during the early 1900s.

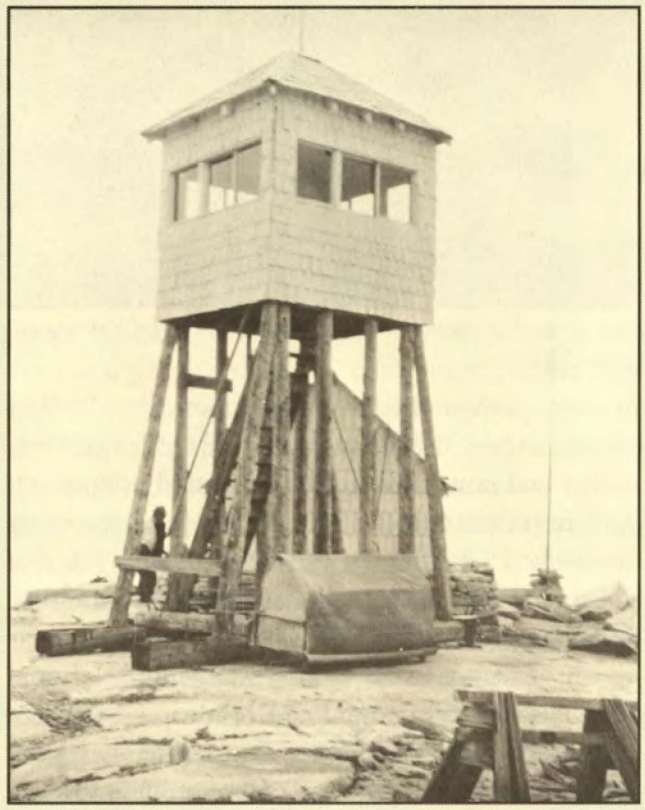
from fire prevention to actual fire suppression. DuBois wondered how the service could charge for grazing, timber and power plant sites if it could not prevent the forests from being consumed -and forest resources diminished - by fire. In particular, duBois felt that fire suppression on the national forests was often unorganized and ineffective.

Turning to the nearby Stanislaus National Forest as a testing ground, duBois proposed a more systematic fire suppression force that was built around the permanent staff. He concluded that a more organized, military-type effort was needed to combat wildfires. Retiring to his Sausalito home in the winter of 1914, duBois began writing a fire preparedness manual. Recognizing the realities of having to rely on temporary or even untrained firefighters, his approach centered around a core unit that could provide some direction and organization to the fire suppression scene. Other forest officials had agonized over the problem, also. On the Sierra, duBois' text drew mixed reviews. While many rangers felt it brought more organization to the fire scene, others considered it condescending, too erudite or reflecting the viewpoint of someone who had never been on a fire-line. "It went over my head," complained one fire-line veteran.[9]

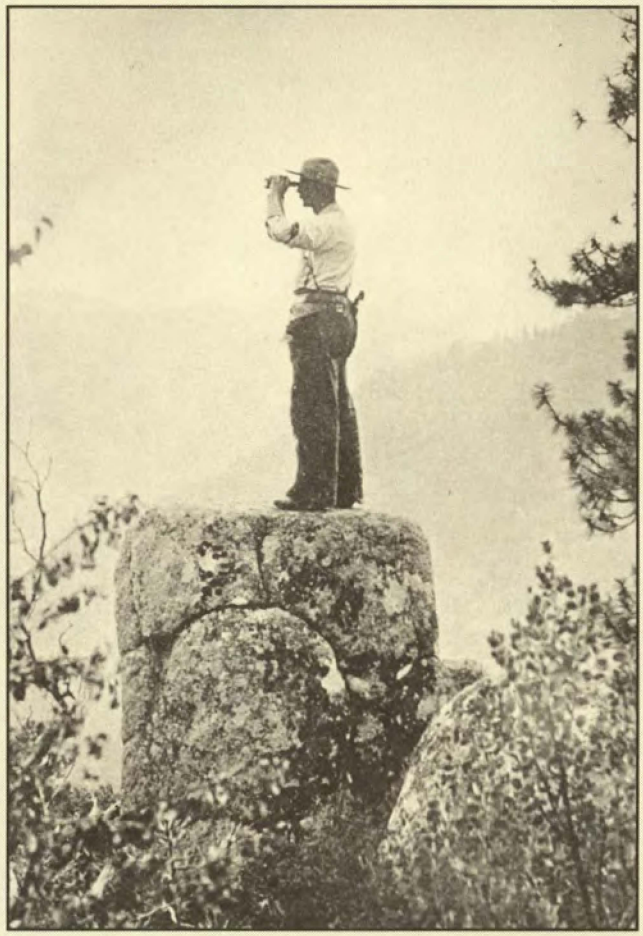
Once the San Joaquin and Eastern Railroad came into existence, the Sierra was quick to ride its rails. In a unique approach to fire detection, the Forest Service equipped one of its first automobiles with flanged wheels and sent it up the line. The "Speeder" soon became an effective fire detection and suppression vehicle. During the fire season, daily patrols were made up the railway. It also became the favorite way to travel between Auberry and Big Creek. Visting foresters, Congressmen and other important forest visitors were routinely invited to ride the rails. About a year after the vehicle was pressed into service, Maurice Benedict and Chester Jordan rounded a curve too fast and the Speeder went off the tracks and down into the San Joaquin River Canyon - never to be

Fire - Fire!

Sierra Lookouts



As one of the pioneer forests, the Sierra National Forest gave birth to a variety of fire lookouts in the early 1900s. The first Signal Peak, left, came onto the scene about 1910. The origin of the Bald Mount lookout, above, near Shaver Lake is uncertain.



Sight Rock at North Fork, right, served as the Sierra first fire lookout. It was followed by a series of lookouts on Shuteye Peak, above. The Speeder, below, with rangers Hale Mace, Edward Mainwaring, Bill Thrower and Josea Clark, rode rails of the San Joaquin and Eastern Railroad.

With garden hoe at the ready, a unidentified pair of rangers' wives scout out a wildfire on the Sierra in the early 1900s.

seen again. While the two rangers were thrown clear, both were "pretty badly cut up but escaped without any permanent injuries." Fortunately a replacement Model-T Ford was obtained and pressed back into service.[10]

Suppression progress was being made on other fronts as well. Atop Deadwood Peak - above Fresno Flats - an early lookout came up with an improved approach for determining the location of fires. By using the station as the center of a hypothetical circle, the location of a fire could be pinpointed by using radiating lines from that point to bisect with a similar sighting from another station. Of course, all that was based on the accuracy of the maps; at that time, the Forest Service was still using incomplete - and in some places - inaccurate maps. Time and again the rangers asked for more accurate maps.

Before Tully left the service he noted that after Pinchot's 1908 visit, the long standing shortage of shovels, axes and other fire tools was addressed for a while. But over the following years, breakage and wear and the lack of any funding caused the fire tool problem to re-emerge. Although the McLeod fire tool continued to gain acceptance, no effort had been made to have it mass produced.

Through the years, wildfires ravaged much of the land. Such fires burned indiscriminately, with little regard to property or position. At one time in the fall of 1917, the North Fork headquarters was

Under pressure from the Forest Service, the early power companies and big sawmills established their own fire crews, such as this tank car pumper.

nearly engulfed by fire. An October 2, 1917, report in a Fresno newspaper noted that "a forest fire which started in the brush near town on the Knight Ranch was soon fanned into a roaring fire by the strong west winds, and the village was threatened, together with the property of the power company at Newman Camp, on the other side of the ridge. Men were pressed into service and by back-firing prevented damage to the Shinn Ranch and the ranger station buildings. The fire which continued eastward took everything before it as far as South Fork Creek. Back-firing saved the government building at Sight Rock. Back of the Shinn Ranch the fire extended nearly to the forest headquarters, which were saved by hard fighting. The fire burned over an area of 2,000 acres."[11]

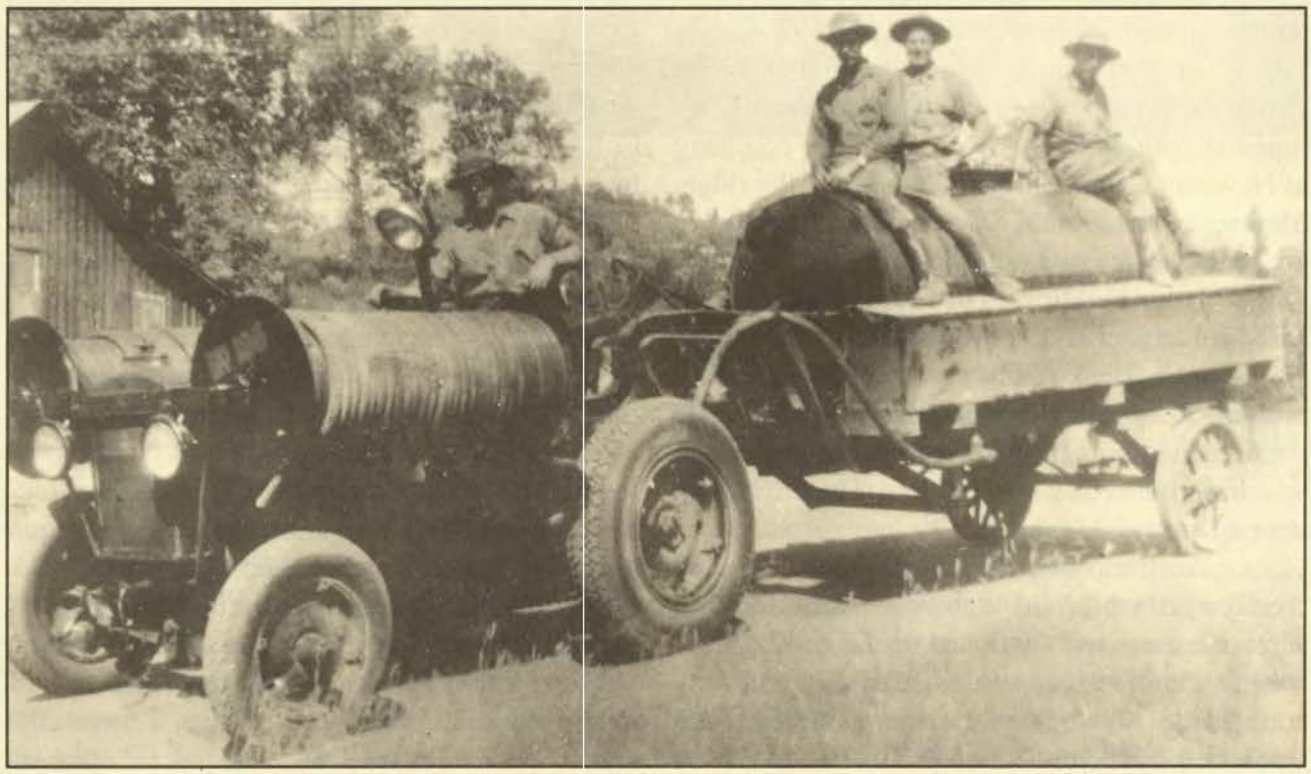
Wofford observed that the recruitment of "really worthwhile" fire crews was started in 1918. This one crew was stationed at the forest headquarters, and was sent to any bad fire that they could get to. "It was a seven-man crew with a fire truck equipped with enough fire tools for 20 firefighters. At that time firefighters received 25 cents an hour and were fed while on the fires," he observed.

As the fire scene became hotter and more widespread, the Forest Service looked for relief. At one point in 1915, a weary firefighter, S.L. Cotta, a ranger on the Eldorado National Forest, looked to the heavens and then asked if the service had ever investigated the use of airplanes or dirigibles to spot forest fires, the Sierra Ranger newsletter observed in 1914. Little could he have foreseen what the future was to hold.

In California man-caused fires increased from 710 in 1910-14 to 938 in 1915-18. Incendiary fires also forced the formation of an arson squad, and the production of a manual, "Instructions Relating to the Apprehension & Prosecution of Fire Trespassers on the National Forests." The controversy ran hot and cold. The bad fire years produced more interest and advocates, but in more stable periods it was more or less forgotten. In 1917 there were 1,862 fires in the national forest, the highest number to date.

An early ranger displays the Sierra's fire truck outside the norht Fork Compound.

Early Sierra Smokechasers

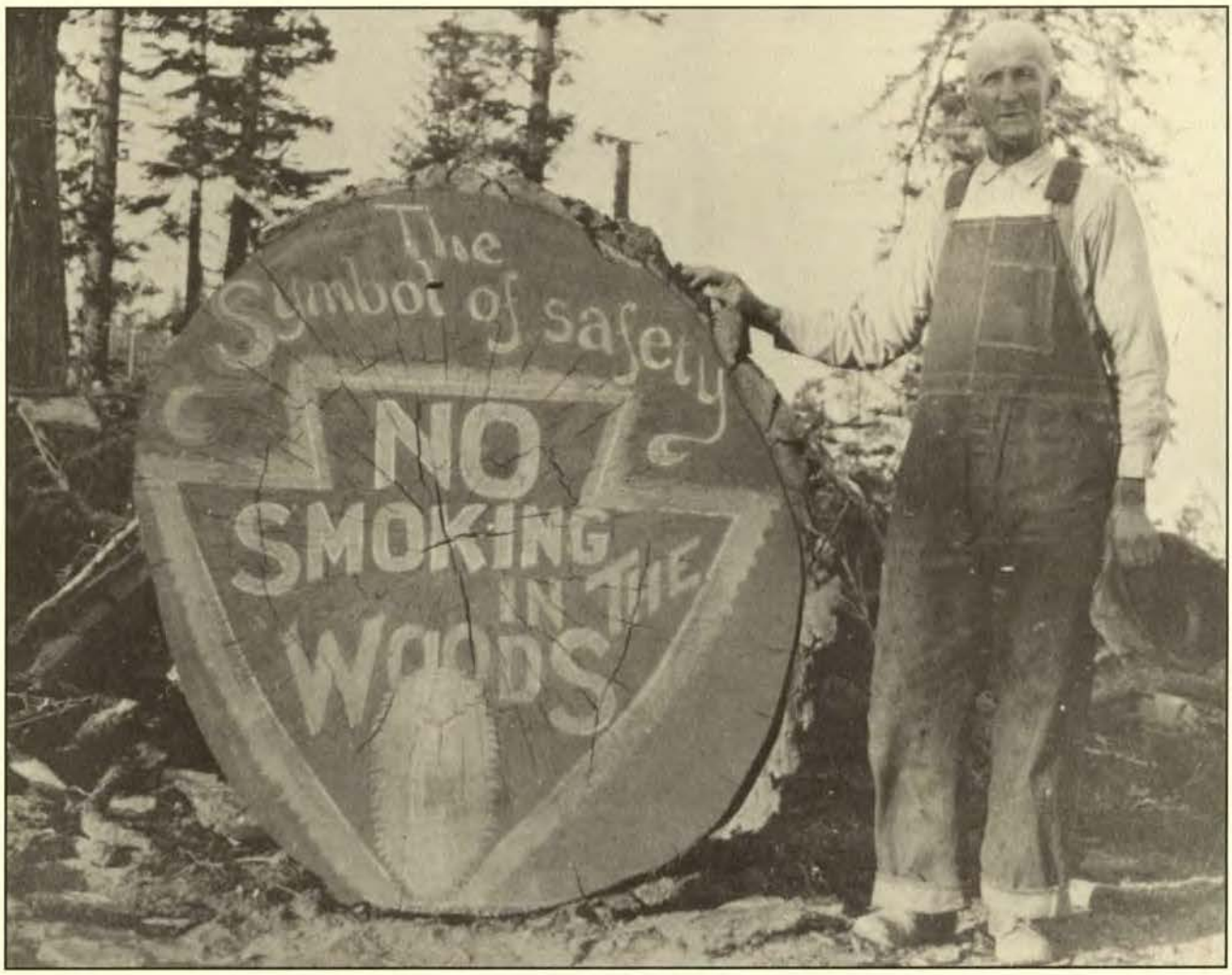


A Fordson tractor with a 500 gallon tank arrived as the first tanker in the mid-1920s.

By today's standards, the early Sierra fire crews - and their equipment - may not have inspired confidence: Above,members of a 1922 crew pose at North Fork. These first firefighters may have put hope before reason when they went up against the big fires of the early 1900s. Using a primitive or second-hand equipment they were often out-gunned by their ageless adversary. Starting in the 1920s, the Sierra fire crews gradually acquired some basic equipment.

By any measure, the fire suppression effort of the day remained primitive. In the late 1920s, the first "back pack" water pumps were tested on the forest. With their slide-trombone action, the first Smith-Indian fire pumps could throw a stream of water nearly 40 feet. The main disadvantage was the five gallon supply tank, which was usually insufficient to make them effective.[12]

In 1920, the Forest Service found itself in the middle of a smoldering controversy over light burning with author Stewart Edward White, Shinn's old mountain neighbor. In the March issue of Sunset magazine, White claimed that by suppressing all fires, the Forest Service was contributing to the build-up of insects and, therefore, to the destruction of forests. While the Sierra Forest was not singled out, Wofford and others felt their longtime friend and neighbor had done the service an injustice by not consulting them beforehand. In particular, White had argued that by suppressing all fires, the agency had encouraged the proliferation of bark beetles. "In the valley and canyons of Tuolumne of California, near Hetch Hetchy, he has killed 95 percent of the mature trees," White wrote of the beetle. The author then went on to cite incidents were insects had destroyed nearly two billion board feet of timber. "No fire has destroyed utterly a billion feet of mature pine trees; no fire has ever killed 95 percent of pine trees in any considerable area; no fire known has swept pine lands as destructively . . . Yet $188,313 was in 1917 spent for fire control in California and $10,021 for 'bugs,'" White wrote in his critical article. [13]



Fire suppression got a big assist in the early 1900s when Sierra forest users were bombarded with a host of fire prevention messages.

In 1917 and again in 1924, above, North Fork had a close call after wildfires nearly overran the mountain community. The 1917 blaze nearly engulfed Forest Service facilities.

The controversy raged all the way to Washington, D.C., where Chief Forester Henry T. Graves fought back, pressuring the editors of Sunset to open their magazine to rebuttal. He maintained that White had based his conclusions on unproven and unfounded reports concerning light burning. "Mr. White alleges these fires prevented outbreaks and damage by insects. Just how, he does not know, but he is certain the burning is essential to prevent insect infestations." Graves acknowledged that while light burning can remove modest accumulations of forest debris, White's approach "would either be disastrous in its damage or unworkable on account of the cost."[14]

Within the ranks of the rangers, opinions touched both sides of the issue. While Gene Tully fought numerous forest fires, he personally subscribed to the light burning or Indian burning approach. Years later, after he had returned to the Mendocino Forest, the veteran ranger encountered an Indian who was patrolling a fire line. Tully mentioned the hard work in fighting a fire. "He hung his head a moment, looked up at all the smoke and sadly said, "Yes, injuns make big forest; white man

Along with the fire lookouts, the telephone served as the foremost line of defense against wildfire. Above, rangers install a line on the Sierra, circa 1915.

burn all up;" Tully recalled the dialog.[15]

But for Wofford, who had grown up in the North Fork area and had seen the damage from wildfire, the argument was moot. He maintained that while the Indians were apprehensive of fire and were careful not to let a fire get started; if one did occur in their area they would simply move to another rancheria.[16] However, some rancherias apparently used fire to clear the forest of brush and thereby improve hunting.

In 1914, Tully left the service, figuring he had gone as far as he could. It was now up to so-called technical men or trained foresters to take over. As the original "grazing ranger" on the Sierra, his responsibility was to regulate grazing, to make sure that the range was not over-grazed. Tully had concluded that he might do better at ranching and left the service. In the succeeding years more and more rangers left the service. DuBois had once remarked that the rangers, "while pretty good men, they were too poorly paid for the politicians to worry about." Over time, attrition took its toll. College-trained foresters replaced the old cowboy rangers. But the complexity and the duties of their jobs were increasing, prompting one ranger to note that there were 60 different tasks - from building trails to preventing illegal uses that a ranger was expected to do.

However, the politicians were more concerned about the cost of firefighting. As World War I inflation mounted so did the cost of fire suppression. The cost of combating an average fire had risen from $15.35 in 1912 to $125.80 in 1918.[17] Some of the higher costs can be attributed to improved suppression techniques. Firefighters began receiving training. While pick-up crews were still utilized, the service now had trained fire-fighting crews. At the same time, the cooperative agreements with the stockmen, timber operators and power companies were adding manpower to the fire scene. The foothill and mountain communities began to realize that wildfire played no favorites with boundary or property lines.

The effort to produce a universal fire-fighting tool took many approaches. Variations and combinations of the shovels and axes made their appearances on the Sierra and other national forests in those early days. The McLeod, Gott and Pulaski fire tools were part of that history. The McLeod was listed in the duBois fire prevention manual of 1914. It was redesigned in 1927 under Forest Service patents, and in 1929 a lighter version was brought out. Mal McLeod also introduced the first portable backpack pump in the region at the Jerseydale Station, in about 1915.

In the days before bulldozers, aerial tankers and Nomex suits, the early fire fighting scene was something akin to the dark ages. The one tool that has stood the test of time is the McLeod, the pioneer ranger's homemade tool. Bob Flynn, who served the Forest Service for nearly 40 years and was involved in over 100 major fires before he retired from the Sierra in 1975, said the McLeod remains the tool of choice for many firefighters. "It's been modified several times and other variations have been designed, but the McLeod is still the prime tool for the fire line, particularly in the West."[18]

Chapter Five

Benedict Paves the Sierra Way

In 1909, about the time the fledgling forest known as the Sierra was taking its first steps in resource management, a tall, lean, soft-spoken but decisive young All-American football player from Nebraska by the name of Maurice A. "Ben" Benedict arrived at North Fork.

Little could he have anticipated that he would go on to become an institution on the Sierra, affecting the growth and development of the Sierra National Forest perhaps more than any other individual.

After having spent a short time as a firefighter on the Plumas National Forest, Benedict had been appointed Assistant Supervisor on the Sierra. In that capacity he had served both Charles Shinn and Paul Redington. In 1914, he made a brief detour to the Mendocino National Forest, where he served as Supervisor for two years before rushing back to "his Sierra" in 1916 as its third Supervisor. From that time, Benedict went on to become the Sierra's longest-tenured Supervisor, serving 28 years until his retirement in 1944. In those years he compiled an unrivaled trail of accomplishments on the teen-age forest spanning the years from the horse-and-buggy era to modern times, and a forest replete with a network of modern roads, district offices and communication and recreational facilities.

Benedict's early days on the forest were not easy ones. "We did most of our travel by horseback with a pack horse or two following along behind. Those were the horse-and-buggy days . . . and one of the chief considerations in locating a ranger station was the horse feed, for without 'Old Paint' we were lost."[1] Early on, most of what could be called roads had been built by the lumber or power companies or the stockmen; most of them were barely passable for light carriages or wagons. "There were no oiled roads, of course, and the dust in summer was often 6 inches deep and on steep grades, where the heavy lumber, 16-animals outfits had to 'rough lock' down the hills, the dust was so deep that it would actually flow like thin mud," he wrote years later.

On his initial trip from Madera to North Fork, Benedict recalled the stage ride that took 12 long, hard hours over ruts called wagon roads. "We took the horse stage {Bigelow's} out of Madera before it was daylight and all during that long day with the mud at times almost hub deep. . . and the driver always urging us to take a short cut - I walked about half the way from Belview to North Fork - we rolled into North Fork at 6 that night - 12 hours later and now you make it in less than an hour."

The forest at the time of Benedict's arrival was far removed from today's. At that time, the lack of roads on the forest posed comparatively little problem for the Forest Service. In the years before the arrival of the automobile there was little need for roads, he recalled; instead, much of the impetus was on trails. Horseback or "hoofing it" were the ways the rangers traveled. And one of "Ben's boys" - as they become known - observed that he had worn out a half dozen horses before the horseless carriage came to the rescue.

Benedict recalled that during his first stint on the Sierra very few cars had ventured into the mountains around North Fork. "Along about 1914, when I left for the Mendocino Forest for my first Supervisor's job, there had hardly been an auto come up as far as the foothills, but things changed pretty fast with Henry Ford and his Model-T and

Maurice A. "Ben" Benedict, legendary Sierra supervisor, circa 1934.

Dodge with his very low gear invading the mountains, and with them came an increasing demand for better roads, so that when I returned to the forest as its Supervisor in 1916, I came with a Model-T and ideas of roads."

Benedict's push for roads and a transportation system can be readily understood. From his arrival in the Sierra Nevada he had been at war with wildfires. At that time fires were on the upsurge, sparked in some ways by the increasing population - and their new-found mobility. In California, man-caused fires increased dramatically once cars began invading the forest lands. In 1917, for instance, the California region had 1,862 fires, the highest number to date. And despite numerous efforts at fire prevention and the implementation of duBois' fire suppression recommendations, the war with wildfires had become more acute.

Another factor guiding Benedict's crusade for roads had been the devastating cancellation of the 1912 timber sale with the Sugar Pine Lumber Company. When first awarded, the contract represented the largest timber sale from any national forest at that time. It was canceled four years later, however, prompted by the lack of access to the timber stands in the Chiquito Basin. As a result, Benedict felt a road system was imperative for prudent forest management. He wanted a connecting road system that would span the forest and eliminate the need to have a ranger or guard station every few miles. In particular, he insisted on a road network, which would link the northern end of the forest to the southern, using North Fork as the hub.

He was not alone in his insistence on roads. Shortly after he took over as Supervisor, the Forest Highway System was inaugurated, a Congressional-mandated program that was to be integrated with the Bureau of Public Roads. Under that approach a system of road standards was adopted, with each Forest Supervisor developing his own plan for his own forest. Benedict started drawing lines on a 1916 map - the first complete Forest Service map. "I cannot remember how many maps I spoiled drawing roads, but ended up with pretty much the forest system being gradually constructed on the forest today." Almost immediately the crews went to work on his road plan. Deeper and deeper into the forest they drove, using nothing more than man and mule power - with the familiar Fresno scraper.

Benedict's personality and missionary zeal served him well in building the cohesiveness of his ranger staff. While Redington had remained somewhat aloof or distant from the staff, Benedict came across as warm and approachable - and with a great sense of humor. "We found that Benedict had a very fine personality and a keen interest in the domestic problems of the entire personnel on the Sierra. He was full of energy and enthusiasm in the Forest Service and the job of its administration, and so, almost from the beginning he was accepted as one of us," observed Roy Boothe, a long-time friend and co-worker who would go on to become Supervisor of the Inyo National Forest. "Throughout his {Benedict's} long service as a Forest Supervisor, these qualifications of personal interest in his subordinates and his untiring efforts to improve their efficiency in the service and their living conditions, have made him one of the most popular Supervisors in California."[2]

Perhaps Benedict's most salient attribute was a willingness to try new approaches. "He was never bound by hard and fast adherence to the es-

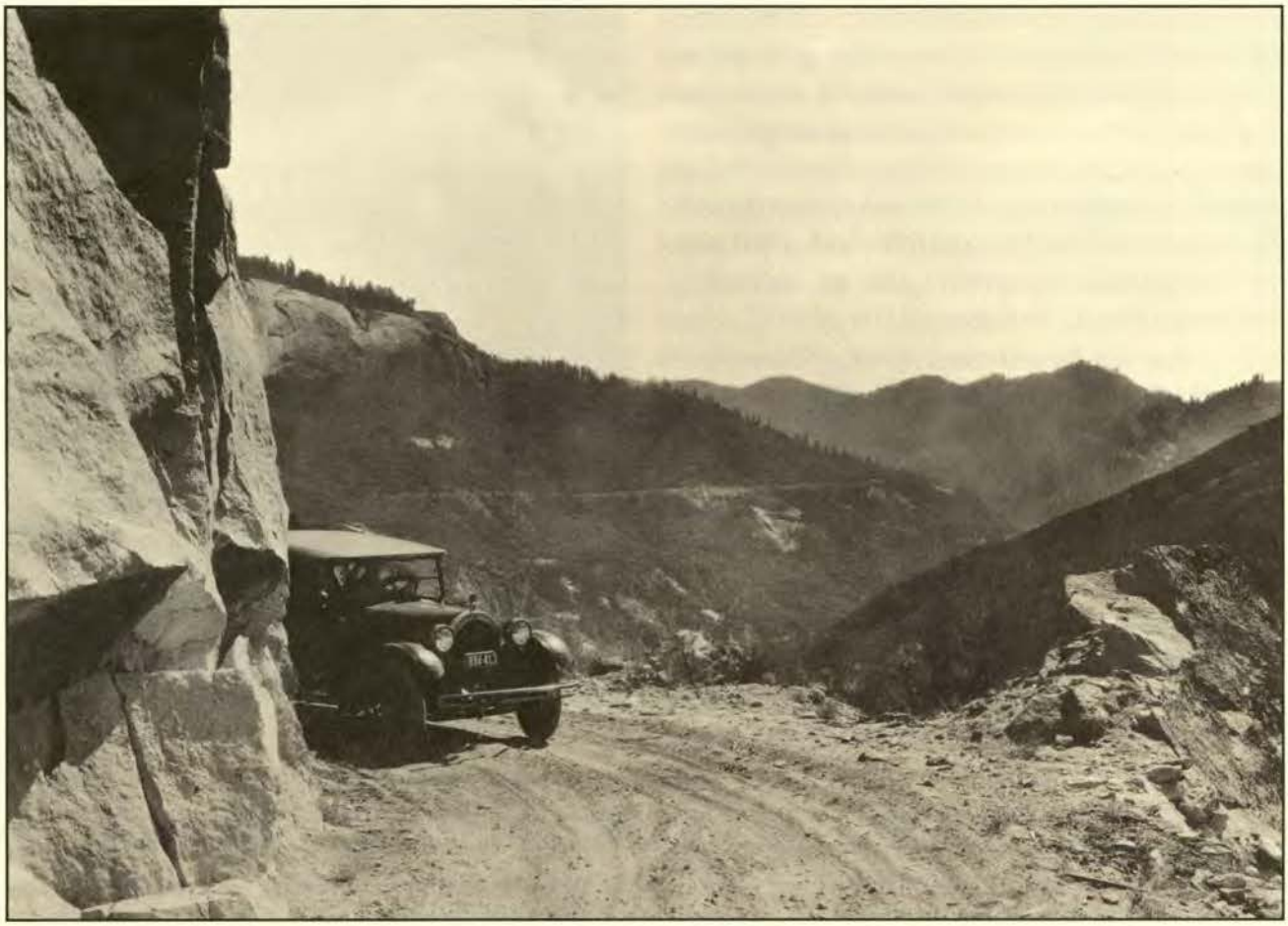
tablished procedure, and he therefore, in my opinion, contributed much to the building of service administration policy. As an example, he was one of the earlier advocates of a modified specialist system of administration. For several years he advocated a plan which would make, for instance, the ranger who was best qualified to handle grazing assume full responsibility for its administration of the forest," Boothe said.

Nor was he reluctant to roll up his sleeves and tackle a problem head on. "Benedict was never happier than when he could don a suit of coveralls and put on a set of tree-climbers and join a telephone construction or maintenance crew of rangers, assume the controls of a road grader, truck or tractor on a road construction or maintenance job....He was sometimes criticized by his superiors for this tendency, which they felt hindered or perhaps detracted from his ability to exercise broad supervision of his job, and to maintain the proper respect of his subordinates."

Benedict's supervisorial watch brought other changes besides roads. With the entrance of the United States into World War I, along with the resulting demands on the national forest for timber and forage, the Supervisor saw the need for a Fresno office. Apparently Benedict felt forest management required some kind of a presence in the valley city at least for two days a week. What became of the office remains a mystery, however.

About that same time the Forest Service was at war with itself - and on several fronts. By the early 1920s the ranger's job demanded more in the way of education, training and dedication. By that time the ranks of the field personnel were becoming more defined, led by rangers, the subrangers, fire guards and laborers. Yet many of those early rangers, who had gone through the formative years of the service were leaving for employment that paid more than $60 a month - or at least provided some hope for the future. As early as 1914, Ranger Gene Tully had left the Sierra to go into ranching. Through the years others followed. The combination of low pay and long hours was bad enough, but the inability to gain year-round status claimed many more. "H.E. Duncan resigned from the service and will also go into ranching. He has felt that he could not afford to stay with the

Lost in the valley? Benedict and his rangers check their map, enroute to one of the early ranger conventions at Trimmer or California Hot Springs.



Much of Benedict's legacy lies with the network of roads that he left on the Sierra National Forest.

service with employment guaranteed for only a part of each year. Duncan leaves many friends and admirers in the service who will be glad to know he will remain in the country and we wish him all sorts of success," the Sierra Ranger reported.[3]

Besides the paper work, others felt they were also fighting a losing war against wildfires. Every summer the situation took on hotter and smokier dimensions. For many years Benedict had a friend in Forest Inspector Coert duBois. While a few critics had spoken out against duBois' fire suppression manual, he was a frequent and popular visitor to the North Fork compound - which was often referred to as "Camp duBois." As an inspector who had covered much of the Sierra Nevada, he knew well the difficulties the field rangers and fire guards endured. Repeatedly he tried to convince the Washington office to improve the rangers' pay scales. In 1919, after returning from the war, duBois "went to the wall" and left the service after his pleas for improved salaries provided no response.[4]

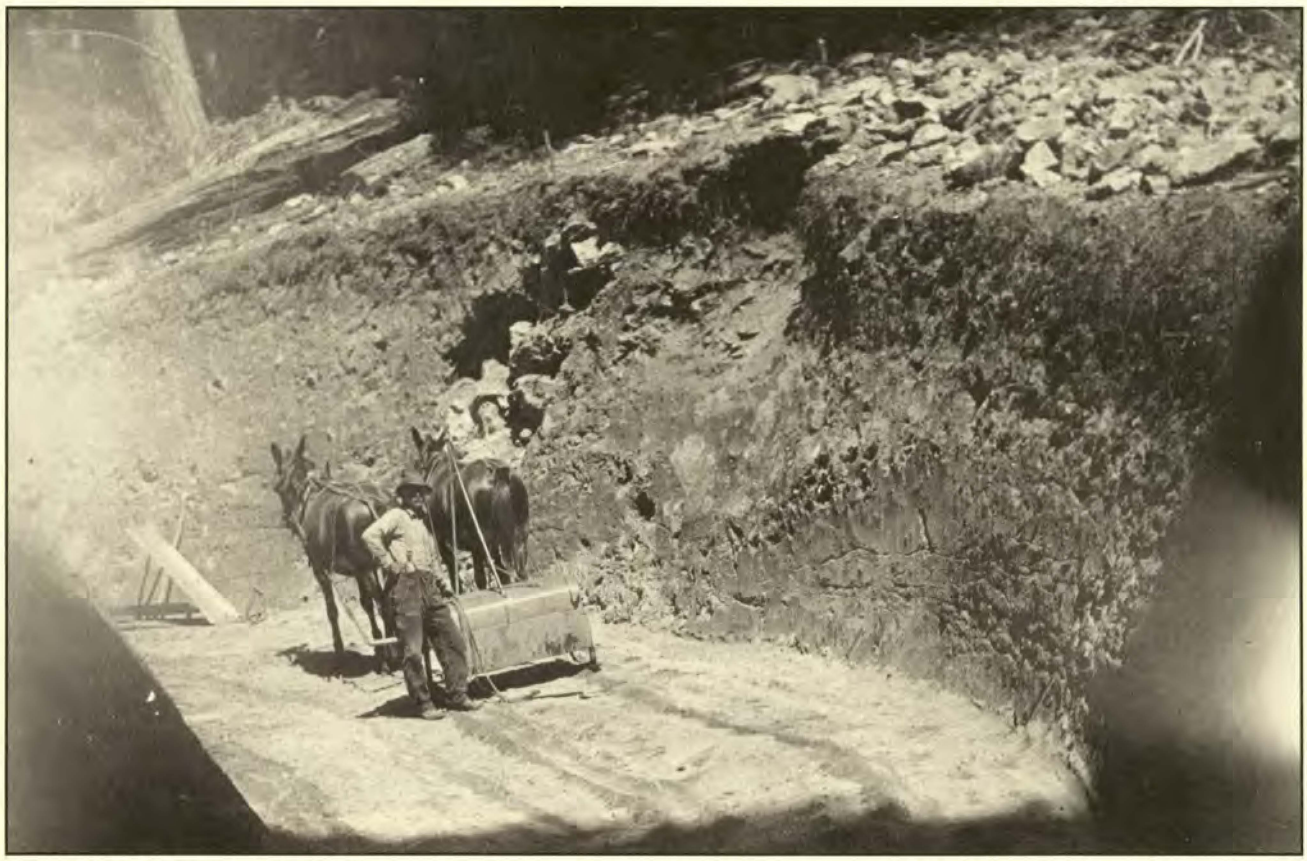
Shortly before he resigned, however, duBois made one significant contribution. While visiting a San Francisco restaurant, he bumped into a young pilot, Major H.H. "Hap" Arnold of the U.S. Army Air Corps. Out of that chance meeting the two became friends and collaborators in a unique experiment. DuBois outlined the difficulty associated with combating wildfires. Arnold had his own agenda, which centered around the justification for an air force in the innocence of post World War I. The two men began discussing the possibilities and the problems. Out of those meetings, Arnold proposed an arrangement whereby the Air Corps would make overflights of the forests during the fire season, using the high-flying planes for aerial patrols.

After securing the necessary permission, support facilities were established at Mather Field near Sacramento, March Field near Riverside and Chandler Field at Fresno. "During this trial flight work, a couple of officers and ships were assigned

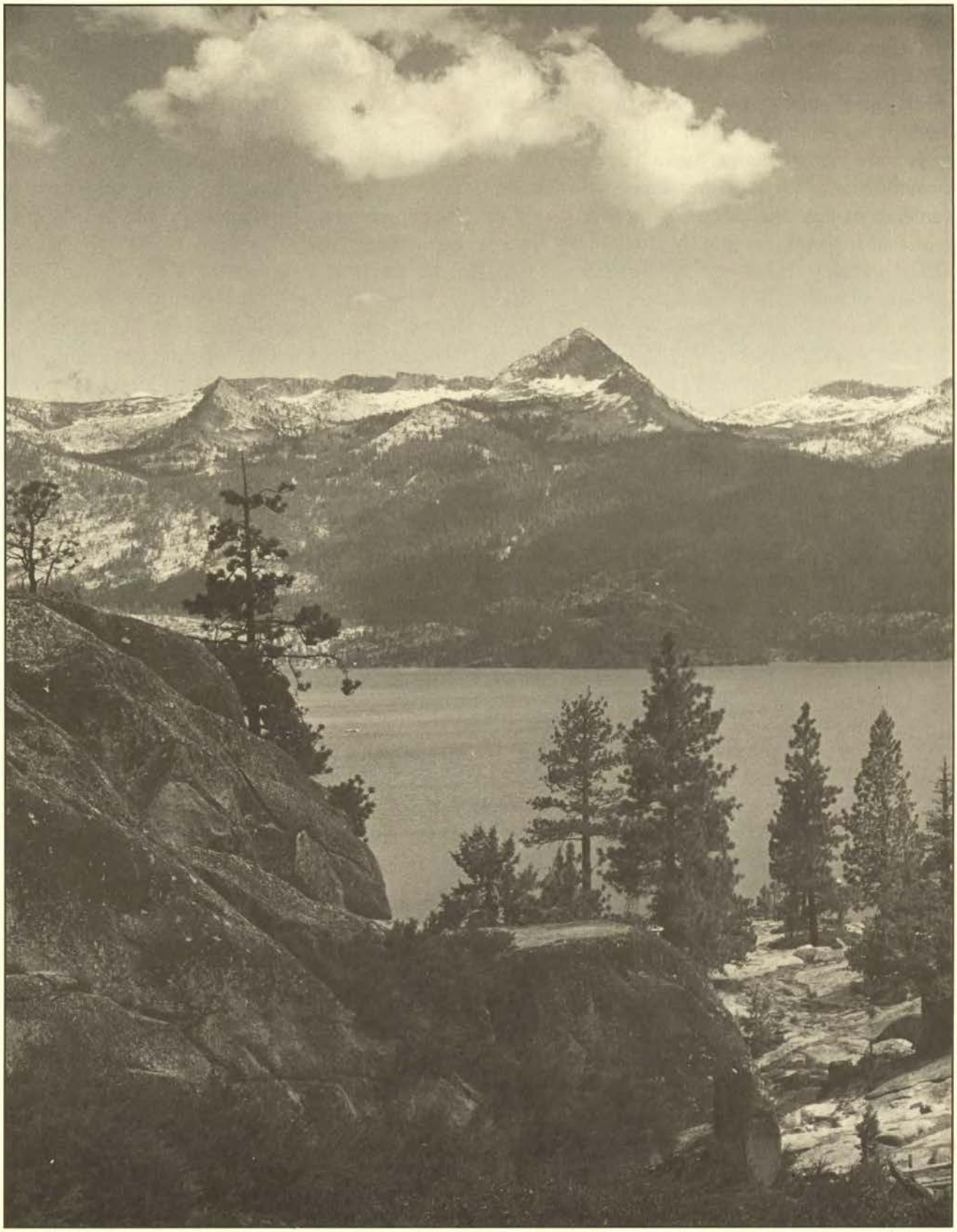
to a small base near Fresno, and Supervisor Benedict and Ranger Mal McLeod were taken over the Sierra Forest by the pilots to get an idea of the fine view to be obtained of the forest from an airplane," one participant related.[5] In May, 1920, five pilots and about 20 enlisted men were assigned to each of the three bases. Out of Fresno, daily patrols were inaugurated, flying a triangular course over the Sierra Nevada, using Bakersfield and Sacramento as the other anchor points. A ranger or assistant supervisor would fly along in the not-always-reliable DeHaviland biplanes to spot any suspicious smoke. Roy Boothe, by then the Kings River District Ranger, was assigned as a liaison and observation officer.

The aerial flights had their advantages and disadvantages. While an aircraft provided an excellent vantage point, a fire could break out and might not be spotted until the next flight or the next day. "Radio instruments at that time had not been developed to a satisfactory degree of performance, and considerable difficulty was also encountered in either sending or receiving reports by radio from the plane. I carried some experiments in dropping messages with a fair degree of success, and I believe that other observers also resorted to dropping messages when they wanted to report fires," Boothe observed.

During one flight over a fire on the neighboring Sequoia National Forest, the plane's engine quit, forcing the pilot to make an emergency landing near Sanger. While some fatal accidents marred the experiment statewide, the Fresno-based flights escaped any such tragedies. While Benedict became a big booster for the aerial patrols, the flights could not fly in the face of economic realities. After two seasons, the flights were discontinued. It was concluded that the only practical value of the air patrols that would justify their high costs was an actual wildfire, where the direction of the blaze and its suppression could be determined. Boothe observed that while the early day Army air service patrols were short lived, they paved the way for subsequent contracts where commercial flying services would provide aircraft for fire control observations and other emergencies.[6]



With the familiar Fresno scraper, an early forest employee carves away at the Beasore Road in 1923.



In 1924, Benedict led the effort to perpetuate the memory of Supervisor Charles H. Shinn in the naming of Mount Shinn, an 11,000-foot peak near Florence Lake.

The proliferation of hydroelectric facilities that Shinn had warned about in 1907 also gave Benedict cause for concern. By the 1920s both the Southern California Edison Company and the San Joaquin Light and Power Company were casting about for additional generating sites on the Sierra. A.G. Wishon's San Joaquin Light and Power Company had their eye on additional generating sites in the Kings as well as the lower San Joaquin rivers.

The most far reaching development came as Southern California Edison launched the second phase of its Big Creek project. This undertaking required the herculean job of constructing a road over 9,100-foot Kaiser Pass so the contractors could begin work on the Ward Tunnel and Florence Lake Dam. While use of the road was restricted initially, it was eventually opened to public use.

In many ways, the Sierra National Forest had already become the epicenter of hydroelectric power in the nation. The Sierra power scene had also pushed the creation of the Federal Power Commission as recommended earlier by Shinn.[7] But more important, the emerging hydroelectric scene was generating an inordinate amount of interest from valley residents seeking recreation - or relief from the sweltering summer heat. The manmade reservoirs at Huntington and Bass lakes had become magnets for a growing number of recreation users. At that time no one, not even Benedict, could envision the impact hydroelectric development would eventually have on the forest. Hikers, hunters, campers and fishermen were coming to the mountains and forests in increasing numbers. Benedict could see their footprints on the forest. The popularity of the service's summer cabin program at Huntington Lake gave an indication of the recreation to come. As Benedict looked at the plans for a new Shaver Lake dam and still other facilities down the line, he realized that the Sierra must be prepared to meet even greater challenges.

By 1916, Benedict had established a High Sierra Ranger District, led by veteran Frank Price, trying to provide an official presence for the growing number of visitors making their way beyond Mono Hot Springs and Vermillion Valley. Two years later, Benedict welcomed the Sierra Club, when it held its annual field outing in the high country above Blayney Meadows. He recognized that the service needed to abandon its long-standing indifference to recreation and to recognize it as a legitimate use of the forest, giving it equal recognition with timber, forage, water and wildlife.

While camping had made great strides on the parks and forests of California, it was not until 1923, that the Forest Service made its first appropriation to recreation.[8] At that point the growing recreational use had created problems of health and safety. Sanitation, the lack of it, became a serious consideration, but the first allocation of $2,000 - for the entire state - did little more than provide for a few outhouses.

In 1923 Benedict stepped back from his fast paced life to say goodbye to Charles and Julia Shinn, who after 20 years at North Fork moved from their beloved Peace Cabin to Ukiah. By that time Charles Shinn was in failing health. A year later he died. Recognizing his contribution and dedication, Benedict arranged for a mountain to be named for Charles Shinn. Today Mount Shinn stands guard over the mountains and forests overlooking Florence Lake. The 11,000-foot peak remains a towering tribute to both Charles and Julia Shinn, whose combined partnership had the vision, motivation and courage to lead the Sierra National Forest through its founding years.

Yet it was fire that consumed most of Benedict's waking moments during the lean days of the 1920s. Despite his concern and his push for roads and fire suppression crews, nothing could have prepared either him or his fire control officer, Audie Wofford, for the likes of the summer of 1924. As far back as either man could remember nothing could exceed the fire hazards of that fire season.

The winter of 1923-24 had been extremely dry. By June levels were like those found in late summer. In July the first of a series of fire restrictions was imposed throughout the national forests of California. Smoking and the use of fire on timber sale sites were prohibited. Travel and camping restrictions were also imposed. Wofford even triggered one major fire, when sparks from his kitchen

Sierra Ranger Audie Wofford aboard his favorite horse, Brownie.

Sierra Superman, Ranger Wofford

One of "Ben's Boys"

Audie Wofford was a ranger's ranger - especially a Sierra ranger. He had the right stuff, so to speak.

For 37 years Wofford rode the range, first as a guard for the old forest reserve and then going on to become first fire control officer on the Sierra National Forest.

Wofford's trail reaches back to 1881 birth in Texas. As a youngster, he crossed the plains with his family in 1885, eventually settling down to ranch life near North Fork. At that time the mountain hamlet was little more than a wide spot in the road. For a while Wofford attended school, but he was never much of a student. His real education came from the school of hard knocks. When his father was killed in a shooting accident 1898, the teen-age Wofford took over the support of the family. He worked as a laborer, cowboy, logger, and on the survey crew for the Friant-Bass Lake railroad before becoming a clerk in the North Fork general store.

But for a mountain hillbilly, Wofford did all right. In 1905 - with only a few years of schooling - he somehow passed the first civil service examination for ranger - on the strength of his work skills. For the young Wofford, the Forest Service job was a dream come true. It afforded the opportunity to do a lot of things: fire fighting, road building, carpentry and horsemanship. And he loved working amid the tall trees and majestic mountains.

In 1909, when Maurice Benedict arrived on the forest as Deputy Supervisor, he recognized Wofford's enthusiasm and practical skills. "He was one of the finest of the early day rangers, a wonderful woodsman and the best fire fighter ever," Benedict observed years later.

During his long career, Wofford fought hundreds of wildfires. In 1924, he even caused a major fire when sparks from his North Fork stove touched off a major blaze that not only destroyed the cabin but hundreds of acres of brush and forest land on Malum Ridge. But it was the 1939 Source Point Fire that seared its fiery image on to his memory bank.

Out on the forest, Wofford left a tough trail to follow. The rugged ranger could spend the entire day in the saddle and not think a thing about it. For years, he served as the coordinator for the ranger's "horse insurance" program - a pay as you go approach to insure that the ranger always had the mandated mount. He once noted that he had worn out six horses and three mules before his horses gave way to the horseless carriage. Before he left the service, however, Wofford had spanned the transportation spectrum, moving from horses to horseless carriages and then to airplanes -using short wave radio to monitor forest fires.

In the 1920s, Benedict and the Sierra went out of their way to accommodate a growing number of youth camps, such as this Boy Scout camp at Bass Lake.

stove led to a blaze on Malum Ridge near North Fork. During that one long hot summer, the national forests of California were blackened by 1,932 fires - an all-time high - and three times the historic average. The Sierra, for example, had a record-setting 75 fires that burned a total of 76,000 acres, leading all the other 17 national forests in the state. Of that number 26 were classified as major fires, under the classification of that time.[9] In that ordeal by fire, several firefighters were killed and many others were overcome by exhaustion before the fire season came to a close.

When the fire season rolled around the following year, the scorched Sierra fire crews reacted early. "The entire Sierra force is engaged in burning fire lines along the foothill country, using our regular fire lines for roads. We are trying to be prepared for what looks like a bad season. The late spring rains have produced a tremendous growth of grass which in some places is two feet high," the Sierra Ranger noted. At the same time, Benedict noted that one power company and two lumber companies that were operating within the forest were planning to hire their own fire chief. He expressed hope that they would provide "material assistance" in combating the annual fire threat. "The operating companies are alive to the fact that it costs as much money to fight a fire, and that prevention in the long run is the cheapest."[10]

In addition to his struggles with wildfires, Benedict was forever fighting the battle of the budget. In the period after World War I, as use and expectations of the forest grew, the Sierra annual budget remained the same or even shrank. In the 1920s the Sierra was struggling along on an annual appropriation of about $40,000. Every year Benedict's permanent staff of about a dozen permanent employees was hard pressed to recruit the lookouts, fire guards and other seasonal employees to take the forest through another fire season.

Major items, that is capital expense, came along on a hit and miss basis.

Benedict and the Supervisors before him had always lamented their inability to address all the needs on the forest. There were always more needs than funding. To make up for the monetary deficiency, Benedict managed to find and retain some very talented and exceptional individuals. As in the case of Ranger John Hughes, whose crews were constantly improvising and adapting. Around 1925 for example, they converted an old Fordson tractor into the Sierra's first mobile tanker. With a 500-gallon tank trailer the pumper was a welcomed sight at wildfires. Although its narrow width made it difficult to handle on steep hillsides, the mobile tanker was used at 125 fires that first summer. In 1929, the Sierra finally obtained its first new fire truck, having relied on two hand-me-downs that Yosemite National Park had given to the forest in 1922. On that occasion the regional newsletter reported that the new Moreland 3-ton truck had a 400 gallon tank, 500 feet each of 1 1/2-inch cotton rubber lined hose and one inch rubber hose, 10 backpack pumps and a small amount of hand tools. "Their full cost, fully equipped, is $4,200 each."[11]

About the same time Benedict noted that Secretary of Agriculture William Jardine was going to be making his own stream surveys in the Sierra, accompanied with the prescribed fishing pole. "The Secretary of Agriculture is going to visit this forest for a few days to get a little rest. I think I need a little of the same thing, so I am going to meet the party with my fishing pole and flies and spend a few days with them in the Kings River country. I presume that all the other forests will claim that I am trying to get increased appropriation for the Sierra, and, believe me, if I could do any good in that direction I would be on the job."[12]

The push for roads continued, but much of the construction was done without much formal engineering. In some respects Benedict was fortunate that the early loggers and teamsters had established the first ruts called roads. Similarly, the early railroads also provided some access. On the

Benedict railed at the waste of the early logging companies -and their refusal to reforest cut-over lands.

Fire Prevention Messenger

The First Smokey

In 1928, Finis Shepherd, a 20-year old part-time firefighter for the state Division of Forestry, went up to North Fork, hoping to find full-time employment. There he met Audie Wofford, the legendary fire chief who talked to him about the fire prevention. Wofford asked Shepherd if he knew how to ride a motorcycle. When he told Wofford that he not only knew how to ride but had his own motorcycle, Shepherd was hired on the spot - as the Sierra's first fire prevention officer - on motorcycle.

"Both Supervisor Benedict and Wofford felt it was a good approach. After the second year, they even had my motorcycle painted the Forest Service color and put an emblem on it, along with a sign 'Fire Prevention.' I was also deputized by the state so I could write citations and enforce both state and federal fire regulations, since the federal laws were so hard to enforce.

While never a permanent employee, Shepherd soon had full-time work. During the winter months he wrote news releases and pamphlets on

Fire cop Finis Shepherd took fire prevention to new frontiers.

fire prevention. He also lectured on the trees and shrubs at the Huntington Lake summer campus of Fresno State Normal School.

"I wore all kinds of hats. I did whatever they wanted me to do, but in the summer it was always fire prevention. During the 11 years I did that I wore out three different motorcycles. I used to order a Harley Davidson with a special low gear so I could go anywhere that was wide enough for a motorcycle.

"The program was so successful that after the first four or so years Frank Maxson of Sanger was hired to patrol the southern part of the forest around Trimmer and Dinkey Creek.

Shepherd said he seldom became involved in actual fire suppression. "My job was not to fight the fire but to find out how it started, so I tried to get there before the firefighters got there and destroyed any evidence," he recalled.

When he first went to work the Forest Service did not have radios but relied on its own telephone system. The rangers also used a warning system utilizing some small yellow flags that were stuck out in front of each ranger or fire guard station. When those flags showed up, none of the Forest Service personnel would go by a station without checking in to see if there was a message for him.

"When the CCCs came along in the 1930s, I had a crew that ran a new telephone line from Trimmer all the way to Shaver Lake. At the same time another crew from North Fork was working down the canyon toward Shaver.

"It was the first telephone line on the forest that was installed on poles rather than hung on the trees. I became the emergency man that maintained the phone lines.

"Around 1936 or 1937, radios started showing up on the forest. They were rather awkward to use because the ranger had to stop his car and throw up a line into a tree and then pull up an antennae so they could transmit. They couldn't talk without stopping their cars and doing this. It was rather primitive by today's standards. . . but it usually worked.

"I met Mal McLeod at North Fork. He was the guy who invented the combination firefighting tool, known as the McLeod that was something of a hoe and rake. He made the blade so heavy that you could chop down a tree with it," Shepherd observed years afterwards.

During Benedict's Supervisorial era, a spring meeting of all the seasonal and permanent employees would be held in advance of the fire season so they could make plans for responding to the emergency. Of all the wildfires he came to know, Shepherd said the worst was the 1931 Tollhouse Fire. "The slope was so steep; there was so much fuel and the fire lines were inadequate. It was real rough to fight."

In 1939, Shepherd and 10 other co-workers created their own fire storm when they quit the Forest Service over working conditions. "It wasn't a real strike. I loved working for the Forest Service, but the fringe benefits weren't that great. We quit because there was no pension plan and, more importantly, there was no system for those of us with children to get those youngsters to school. That's why they eventually built the Pineridge School," he said.

west side of the forest, the early travelers to Yosemite also had helped by funding a toll road over Chowchilla Mountain to Wawona. The forerunners of the Edison Company, with their Big Creek project, had also helped open up the Shaver and Huntington areas. But the area above North Fork in the Beasore-Chiquito Basin remained relatively isolated and unroaded. Then Benedict's crews went to work. Roads, of course, require bridges and culverts, and those require engineers. But the Sierra had none. In nearly all cases, Benedict turned to the practical experience of John M. Hughes, who had joined the service some time before World War I. He had designed many of the buildings or outlying guard stations around North Fork. Using little more than a level and tape, Hughes went to work on Benedict's road system, setting the grades and alignments. Hughes had a mountain of on-hands experience, with a "can-do" reputation. As construction foreman, he had laid out the famed John Muir Trail.[13]

When the Forest Highway System came along, Benedict was quick to pick up on that road-building scheme. Besides funds from the Bureau of Public Roads, the measure gave the Forest Supervisor broad authority to develop roads outside the forest - as long as the road contributed to the administration and use of the forest. On a few occasions, Benedict admitted years later, he bent the rules for the benefit of the larger region. What was to become state Highway 41 to Yosemite emerged as a case in point. At that time, many of the valley communities were eager to tap the tourist trade headed for Yosemite. At one time or another, Madera, Merced, Fresno and Raymond each boasted that it was the "gateway to Yosemite." While Benedict didn't want to get involved in that argument, he felt such a route could help both the forest and entire area.

Against this background, the Boards of Supervisors from Fresno, Madera and Mariposa counties, and representatives from the state Division of Highways met at Wawona in 1925 to discuss the options with the National Park Service and Benedict. Under what became known as the Treaty of Wawona, a mutually beneficial road would be built linking Fresno to Yosemite - known today as Highway 41. For its part, the Forest Ser-

Benedict, upper row, right, and the regional office hosted several Congressional tours of the Sierra, including this 1929 visit to North Fork.

This 1919 view at Routt's Mill near Shaver Lake suggests that sawmill operations have come a long ways on the Sierra National Forest.

vice agreed to build the section from Wawona to the forest boundary below Sugar Pine. The counties were to spend $25,000 a year on their sections in the hope that the state would allocate funds to complete the link up. With the help of the Bureau of Public Roads, the Wawona-Sugar Pine section was constructed in short order. Fresno County built its section to the San Joaquin River, but Madera and Mariposa Counties were unable to come up with the funds to complete theirs.

When the neighboring communities saw how expeditiously the Forest Service had done its section, they began pressuring Benedict to do more, and they "turned up the political heat," he observed. After a good deal of argument, the Forest Service decided to extend the Forest Highway System to Coarsegold - on what may have been considered pretty thin grounds since little of the forest touched that area. By doing so, however, it forced the state to recognize that it could no longer ignore the fact that only the middle portion of the road was below standard. The state soon began improving that section on what would become the most heavily used approach to the park. "It was a squeeze play for sure," said Benedict.

One particular road eluded Benedict, however. For years he had advocated a trans-Sierra route, the so-called Mammoth Pass Road, Forest Highway 100 that would run from North Fork along the San Joaquin Canyon, crossing the Sierra at Mammoth Pass.

Benedict and Wofford also inaugurated the first motorcycle fire patrols on the forest in 1928 when they hired Finis Shepherd, a 20-year-old from Sanger. Having worked as a part-time firefighter for the state, Shepherd was hired on the spot as the Sierra's first fire prevention officer - on motorcycle. He was instructed to ride all over the forest, talking to whomever he met about fire prevention. Eventually the program expanded, and Frank Maxson of Sanger was hired to make similar rounds on the Kings River District.

Whatever reputation or standing Benedict had acquired resulted not as much from his expertise but his ability to work with people. He was a people person - a friend, colleague and father image and more to North Fork and the Forest Service community. While both Shinn and Redington had their share of critics, Benedict enjoyed widespread respect and admiration from his staff and the North Fork community. He was a born motivator. As a former team player, he understood well the concept of collective action. About the worst thing his critics could say about him was that he was either "cocky or assertive." But those who had worked with him felt he was an exemplary Supervisor.

Ed Steen of Fresno, who worked with Benedict for 13 years, described him as a man among men. "Benedict was a law in his own right. He was a direct follower of Gifford Pinchot, William B. Greeley and Henry Graves, those early pioneers who formulated the Forest Service's policy of multiple use. Benedict was particularly concerned with fire suppression. It was the Benedict School of Fire Control that made the Sierra National Forest fire prevention pioneers. Surely, no one, except Gifford Pinchot or Bill Greeley, ever inspired their men as did M.A. Benedict," he said.

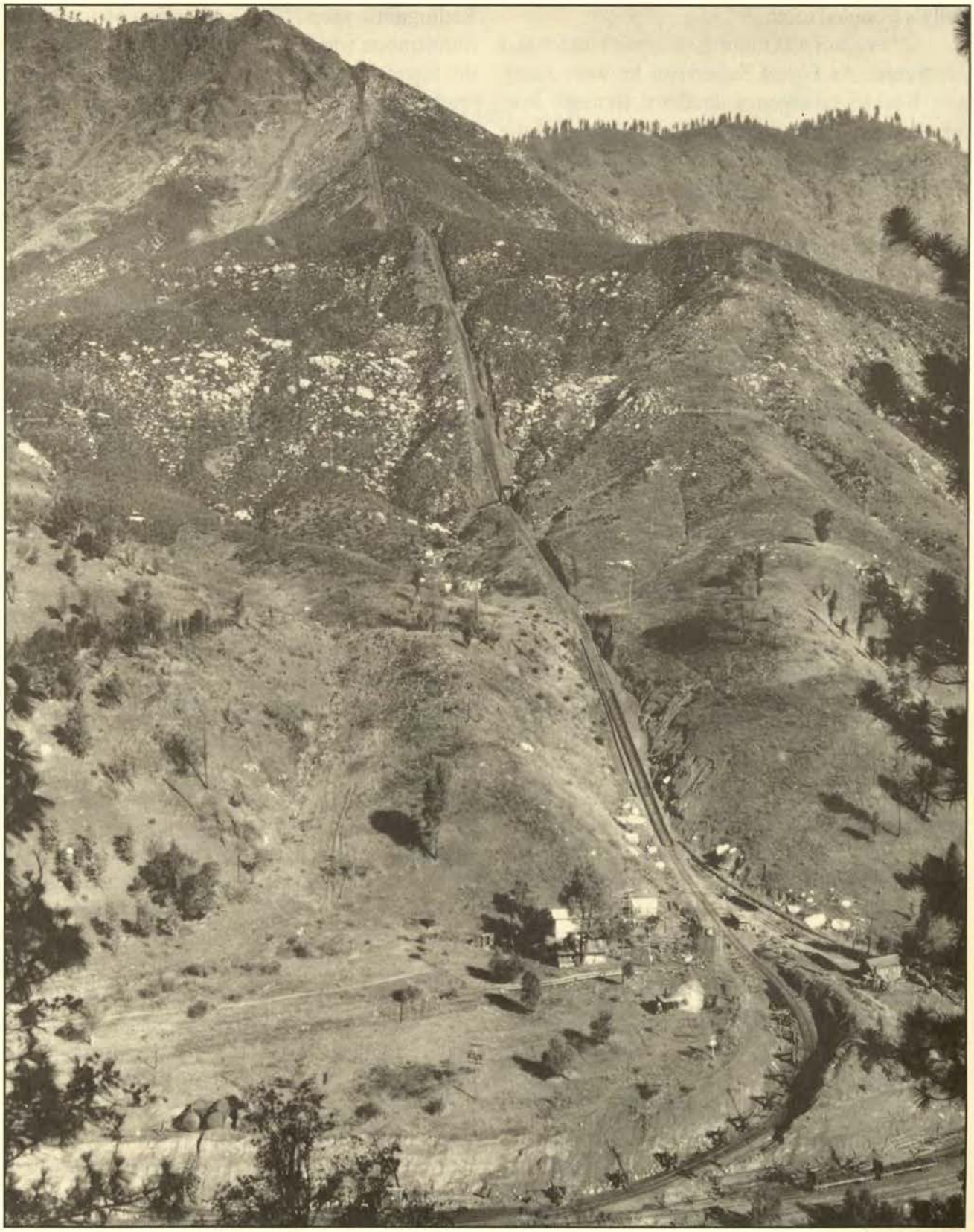
Every year at the onset of the so-called fire season, Benedict required that the rangers and forest guard attend a training program at North Fork. "To begin with, each June was considered to be the opening of the fire season. All hands were summoned to North Fork for what the Navy would call a 'shake down cruise,' say three or four days. We were mustered into a big room and given a rousing call to arms by Ben as he was called," Steen recalled. During these sessions the fire suppression battle plan also was outlined.[14]

The veteran forest guard said that during the 1930s, the only on-going project that was discussed at the training sessions dealt with prescribed burning, an experiment that was directed by rangers J.M. Buck and R.P. Rowe, on assignment from the regional office. "On a fairly steep hillside, not far from the compound, two parallel strips were measured off, one being burned each year, the other protected from fire. And at the base of each strip were metal devices designed to collect the runoff from each strip. The purpose was to show and measure the amount and nature of the annual runoff, the siltation, and other data. We were told that this would determine to some extent the forest policy in relation to ground cover and the larger protection policy. It seemed to us that the strip burned each year showed a significant loss of top soil, and a decline of palatability of the ground cover, and that the runoff of the burned plot was silt laden." On the unburned plot, the raindrops were broken up, much of the water soaked into the forest duff and soil.

"The general conclusion appears to have been that the ground cover on forest land had its own set of values, not to be ignored by the ecologist. The experiment was vigorously pursued over several years, and was observed by many from all over California Region 5," Steen said.

Over time Benedict's contributions and motivating ways came to be known throughout the service. On several occasions he was encouraged to accept a job as Regional Forester in San Francisco or in the Washington Office of the Forest Service. But since his wife suffered from tuberculosis, he was reluctant to leave North Fork for the questionable damp climate of San Francisco.

Rupert E. Asplund, who joined the service in 1927, became the first driver for the Fordson mobile tanker and then went on to become the fire control officer on the Plumas National Forest, described Benedict as "the finest man that ever lived."[15] Veteran Ranger Gene Tully, who had described Julia Shinn as the finest woman he had ever known, changed only the gender when he reminisced about Benedict. That respect came despite the "invited" beating Benedict inflicted on Tully during Benedict's original tour of duty at North Fork - one that involved "Doc Ben," or at least, dentist Benedict. The tale goes that Benedict came upon Tully who was suffering from a severe toothache. The pain was such that Tully was trying to remove the offending tooth by digging at it with his own pocketknife. After admonishing Tully for his butchery, Benedict demanded to take a look. Figuring he could do no worse, Benedict walked over to the toolshed and returned with a pair of blacksmith's forceps. Instructing Tully to "open



The incline railway of the Yosemite Lumber Co. operated on both sides of the Merced River during Benedict's regime.

up," Doc Benedict then went to work and extracted Tully's troubled tooth.[16]

Benedict was more than a road builder and fire-fighter. As Forest Supervisor he wore many hats. Besides emergency dentistry, Benedict was regarded as Mr. North Fork, the titular head of the community. Often he found himself as the ex-officio mayor of the mountain community. He developed close ties to the North Fork Indian community, helping many of the native Americans with their Indian land allotments. Frequently Benedict was called upon for duties that superseded those of any Forest Supervisor. On one occasion, he was summoned to the Indian mission. The mother of a critically ill child wanted a priest to administer the last rites. Benedict got on the phone and pleaded with a Fresno priest to hurry to North Fork. However, the priest could not get there for another day, so instead, the priest relayed the instructions so that Benedict might bestow the rites. Meanwhile, Benedict's wife and the wives of the other rangers had begun ministering to the infant in less spiritual but more direct ways. The ailing infant began to respond. Benedict's relayed rites were put on hold. Eventually the baby recovered, but Benedict's reputation and profile had once again been nudged upward; for a long time after he was known to his staff and the townsfolk as "Padre Ben."[17]

Benedict was also something of a fund-raiser. Much like his predecessors, he always had more needs than money. During his tenure he was often in Fresno or Madera, seeking money or support for some project, such as the Muir Trail or a new bridge across the county line. While the power companies presented many problems, they also provided assistance. He also worked with the stockmen, enlisting their support for brush burning and fire fighting. By all measures, Benedict was a leader, motivator and more.

He noted that between the time of his first arrival at North Fork in 1909 and well into the 1930s, North Fork had changed comparatively little. Although the compound saw the addition of another building every year or so, the town changed comparatively little. Periodically, Benedict would have to calm recurring rumors among the townfolks that the supervisor's office would be moved to Fresno. Such reports had been around since Redington's years. "My conception of forest administration was then . . . that the headquarters of the forest should be on the forest itself so that all the force would live with the people it served directly, and where a minimum of lost time in travel from headquarters to all points would make for economical and efficient administration. North Fork was the geographical center of the forest at an altitude that would permit yearlong residence; so in spite of many attempts to move us to the valley we gradually built up the North Fork headquarters and the roads that gave us the means of getting to and from our work."[18] Benedict had a way of killing those kind of rumors. He made it perfectly clear, "As long as he was supervisor, he wasn't going to become a Fresno flatlander," one early North Fork resident recalled.

Chapter Six

The Civilian Conservation Corps Takes Over the Sierra

While the Great Depression devastated the United States in the late 1920s and through the 1930s, for Maurice "Ben" Benedict, Supervisor of the Sierra National Forest, the economic maelstrom became something of a blessing in disguise, setting the stage for the most pronounced change the forest had ever known.

In the spring of 1933 President Franklin D. Roosevelt looked around at the problems besetting the nation and launched his New Deal. One part of that effort focused on putting people back to work. It was called the Civilian Conservation Corps - or more commonly, the CCC or Three Cs. The thrust of the CCC was aimed at unemployed young men 17 to 25, who could perform needed work on public lands and thereby benefit social, economic and natural scenes. It many respects it was a bold attempt to capture the nation's human resources to deal with problems of its long-neglected natural resources. Soon thereafter, hundreds of CCC camps were established across the country, including seven on the Sierra National Forest.

Even before the CCC arrived on the forest, a state funded work camp had been established on the Sierra National Forest in December of 1931. Located on the south fork of the Merced River, it was manned by those who had been picked from bread lines in the Bay Area. This initial facility had been funded by the state in cooperation with Los Angeles County and the Forest Service. Even before this first camp became operational, it became evident that the Depression was much more severe than estimated, and two more camps, one in Redding and another in Southern California, were quickly established to accommodate the growing ranks of the desperate and unemployed. But even these facilities did little to meet the staggering numbers affected by the economic depression. Even more was needed and the idea was soon enlarged upon by the federal government.

For Benedict the arrival of the CCC was similar to receiving manna from Heaven. After years of struggling along with a minimum of human and financial resources, Benedict embraced the recovery effort with open arms. "The CCC program on the Sierra National Forest was one of the finest things that ever happened to that area. From practically nothing in the way of manpower, we suddenly jumped to a place where we had some 1,500 men just raring to go to work. We started off . . . with seven camps for which we received $7,000 each per month or a total of $49,000 per month, which greatly exceeded many of our annual appropriations.

"We built roads and trails and buildings, and campground facilities of all types; we fought fires and constructed firebreaks and did all of the things that we had wanted to do for many, many years. The men themselves got a great deal out of the program, their parents received a monthly allowance which many of them badly needed, and the Forest Service got a lot of conservation work accomplished that we never thought possible," Benedict observed.

The CCC on the Sierra touched many lives and shaped many careers - as well as the larger Forest Service. Perhaps the most noteworthy case was Anthony "Tony" Dean, who would go on to play a leading role in the struggling experiment known as the Forest Service. As a young man he had come west from his native Massachusetts in the early 1920s. On his first job Dean worked on

The Civilian Conservation Corps left a lasting impression on the Sierra, building roads, trails, lookouts and campgrounds, including sections of the Mammoth road.

the Big Creek hydroelectric project as a stream gauger - despite the fact that he was a college trained engineer. But in 1933, like many others, Dean found himself out of work with no job prospects. While idling away his time, he went fishing at Bass Lake. There he happened to meet Benedict and asked him about the possibilities of a job. Dean heard nothing more for five or six weeks. Then, while camped out in the woods - as was the case with many others during those desperate days - Dean received a hurry-up message to contact Benedict. Responding to that call, Dean was instructed to organize a group of foremen who could run a work camp. In addition, he was directed to make other preparations that included meeting a group of recruits from Georgia the following morning at Merced. From there they were to take the recruits to Cold Spring, near Usona in Mariposa County.[1]

Dean related that the hiring of this core group had been done "informally and expeditiously" because Benedict had "an arrangement" with Congressman Church and a Forest Service permittee, who could insure the certification of the camp foremen hired by the Forest Service. "The foremen invited to accompany me to Cold Spring were told that the job was probably good for three or four months. Wages were not mentioned. I knew nothing about salaries paid CCC camp facilitating personnel and very little else about the Civilian Conservation Corps program. No one was quibbling about wages, however. Jobs were too scarce. Landing a job was the primary consideration. A camp job was a prize. One could at least count on three meals a day," Dean recalled years later.

On the Sierra, CCC camps were located at North Fork, Auberry, Bass Lake, Usona, Batterson, Sugar Pine, Lisenby and Trimmer - part of the

2,000 camps established nationwide. Between Mariposa and Kern counties, a total of sixteen CCC camps came onto the national forests, each lending its muscle to the recovery and improvement of the public lands. The "three Cs" arrival was accompanied by immediate change. Military style camps were installed at all the locations except at bankrupt Sugar Pine sawmill, where the corpsmen took over the lumber company's vacated facilities. At the other locations barracks, mess halls, and recreation halls and classrooms were built. Once the camps were in place, the corpsmen turned their energies to the forest.[2]

Somehow, Dean learned that an old friend, Rex E. "Buck" Lane, was running the CCC camp at Sugar Pine. Up until the Depression came along Lane had been the superintendent of the sawmill. When economics forced the mill to close, he hung around, not knowing what to do or where to go - never realizing that it would soon become a CCC camp. While there is no record to substantiate the fact, apparently the government simply rented the facilities from the owners, who at least had some return from the property. Unlike the other, more spartan logging camps, the Sugar Pine hailed from another era with a long and colorful logging heritage.

In its day the camp was regarded as the best logging camp in the West, complete with its own co-generation plant, a dispensary, recreation room and quarters for both married and single employees. Whereas the other camps had to be developed, the Sugar Pine facility became functional within a few weeks. The camp also benefitted from Lane's practical experiences.

As a veteran of World War I and the lumber business, Lane was a born leader and soon developed an exceptional work program at Sugar Pine. It surpassed many of the other CCC camps in the Sierra - with an unrivaled reputation for its food and living accommodations. Those assigned to Sugar Pine soon realized their good fortune and responded. The camp became a model for the CCC program nationwide. The camps were run by the Army, but during the day the corpsmen were turned over to the Forest Service to do whatever was needed.

Benedict, always on the lookout for another good man, recognized Lane's abilities. By December, he had been placed under Civil Service ap-

A North Fork CCC crew races to their fire truck during in the late 1930s. The massive response of the CCC crews confirmed the need for initial attack on wildfires.

CCC corpsmen clear the forest to make way for a campground near Huntington Lake in the 1930s.

pointment as the "General Foreman" of the Sierra. "His responsibilities were those of Forest Engineer. Buck was therefore, in effect, the first forest engineer on the Sierra, perhaps in the California region," Dean recalled.[3]

With the CCC camps in place, the work of the forest began to move ahead rapidly, ushering in a dramatic change. The most visible came when the corpsmen "vanquished" the traditional Forest Service gray for a new color scheme of tobacco brown. "The paint arrived on the forest by the buckets . . . every building became the new 'tobacco brown,'" recalled one Forest Service veteran.

Then the corpsmen began constructing roads and trails - or their very own quarters. On the North Fork compound, for instance, a dozen new homes or other buildings were constructed, including a barracks for the single rangers. At the growing network of manmade reservoirs the corpsmen also left their mark. At Bass Lake, for example, the CCC built a half dozen campgrounds, installing the first water lines. With land donated from the San Joaquin Light and Power Company, they also carved out the first airport on the forest, the Emery Wishon Airport, which Benedict had wanted to meet fire emergencies as well as accommodate the insect control experts who were coming on to the forest.[4]

As the work progressed, secondary or "stub" camps were established at Huntington Lake, Soquel, Oak Flat and other sites. Within seven miles of North Fork seven camps were eventually established. At the peak 1,500 men were at work, changing the face of the forest. On May 18, 1934, The Fresno Bee reported that the CCC had celebrated its "first birthday," doing reforestation, rodent control, constructing buildings and making topographic surveys. Things were looking up on the Sierra National Forest.

During the nine years the CCC was in ex-

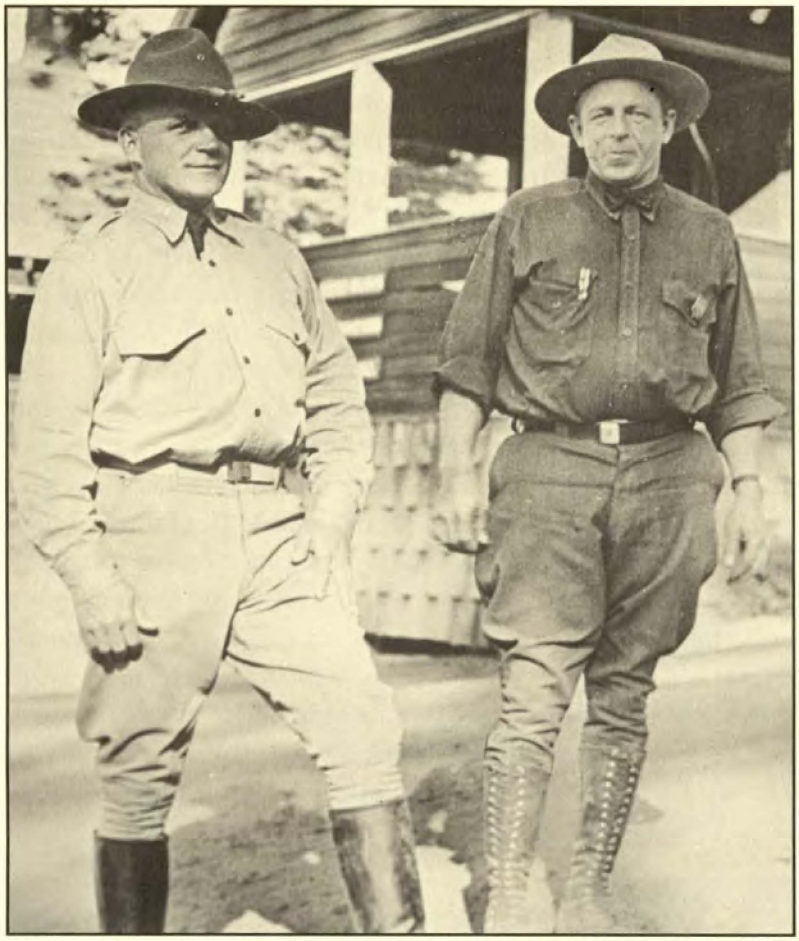
istence, hundreds of young men learned work skills that would last them a lifetime. They also earned $1 a day, but at the end of the month, $25 was sent home to their parents. While most of the corpsmen came from out-of-state, the guidelines permitted the camp administrators to hire a few local or experienced men to round out their crews. At the depth of the Depression, Al Morrison, a native of Big Creek, joined up in 1935 when he saw no other job option. During the summer months his unit was assigned to a camp at Huntington Lake - less than 10 miles from his parents' home. Over the next two years, Morrison fought forest fires, built campgrounds and worked on the Stump Springs Road. That winter his unit was sent to Trimmer, where he lent his muscles to the construction of a bridge across the Sycamore Creek, a tributary of the Kings River.[5]

From time to time, some of the CCC would be assigned to work off the forest lands. For instance, the units from North Fork were often assigned to work in neighboring Yosemite National Park. If the unit had performed satisfactorily they would receive a weekend pass, with an open bed truck hauling the corpsmen to Fresno for a weekend on the town. Then on Sunday afternoon it was back to camp. Outstanding or exceptional units were rewarded with special sightseeing trips to Yosemite or Sequoia national parks.

Eventually Morrison was appointed as a clerk for the Forest Service, continuing to work at Huntington Lake in the summer and at Trimmer in the winter. He noted that while the appointments were intended to last only six months, there was considerable flexibility about how long a corpsman remained on the job.

Morrison remembers corpsmen from his unit working on the campgrounds around Huntington Lake and the Stump Springs Road. Some of the other corpsmen moved over Kaiser Ridge where they built facilities for the High Sierra Ranger District and the lookout on Mount Tom.

The bare-bones recreation room of Oak Flat CCC camp served those corpsmen who built the Dinkey Creek Bridge and the McKinley Grove Road during the 1930s.



Ladislauf Klosh, left, of the CCC and H.B. "Papa" Howard of the Sierra National Forest coordinated efforts of the Huntington Lake CCC summer camp.

From this "stub" or seasonal camp at Huntington Lake, CCC crewman built roads, trails and lookouts around Kaiser Peak.

At the same time, another crew had moved to Mono Hot Springs, and began constructing a bathhouse on the south side of the river. Here, where the Mono Indians had gathered for centuries during their summer migrations, the CCC built a long bathhouse with about 18 tubs. A campground soon followed on the other side of the river - and so did the people.

Despite the Depression, the bathhouse at Mono Hot Springs was popular from the start. It became so popular that Walter L. Hill, a Sanger resident and contractor, felt the area could support a resort and began badgering Supervisor Benedict for a permit. Benedict felt the remoteness, the difficulty of building in that area and a comparatively short season cast major doubts if such a business could succeed. But Hill persisted and finally Benedict acquiesced and approved the required special use permit.

Hill started building, using his own private resources. Because of the distances involved from the valley supply centers, he relied on local materials wherever possible. For the predominant material, the large river rocks or boulders that set the character of the resort, he went no farther than the nearby San Joaquin River. In time a general store and then a dozen small cabins emerged. The following summer, 1937, Mono Hot Springs opened amid great fanfare, attracting the first of a long line of mountain lovers from across the state. Hill's family operated the resort for many years. His daughter, Eula Hill Miles, worked as the postmaster. "We had some wonderful times up there. For many years, before and after the war, the Japanese Americans from the valley used it extensively. There also were some tragedies in the 1950s in lightning and hunting accidents," she recalled. "My dad finally stopped building after he had used up all the nearby river rocks." Then in 1963, after 26 years of service, Hill sold the improvements to the Winslow family, who have continued to operate the facility.[6]

A few other non-CCC related projects also showed up on the forest during the Depression days of the 1930s. In 1938 - after more than 30 years - and a long commitment by the Sierra National Forest - work was finally completed on the 210-mile-long John Muir Trail. When the state legislated project came along in 1915, state engineer William F. McClure had prevailed upon the Forest Service to supervise construction. Not only did the service manage the work, but it contributed the services of its personnel without charge. Redington and Benedict had even solicited construction funds for the trail from Fresno County and other valley organizations.[7]

Of the stalwarts involved in that trail project, none stand taller than John M. Hughes, who served as Benedict's construction foreman. At the onset, the working conditions for those early trail crew members were mind-boggling. Season after season the crews would come back and chip away at the mountainside, pushing the high route a little bit farther. "I had some pretty hard times in those years. Like the three seasons I spent in the gorge on the middle fork of the Kings River, some 3,000 feet down with a crew of men. In these three years (sic) we had no tents, no cots, no fresh meat, no fresh fruit or vegetables. I came out with the same crew I took in for three years and did not lose a man. We got our checks when we came out and our first news," he recalled.[8]

The CCC also cut a wide swath and left its mark at many front-country locations on the forest. At Shaver Lake, where fire guard Ed Steen was serving as a "facilitator," the CCC crew from Camp Hutchens at Auberry built what was to become one of the most popular campgrounds on the forest, the Dorabelle campground. When his crew finished that job they moved over to undertake the difficult construction of a road to the summit of Musick Mountain, where another new lookout was to be erected. On that project, Steen recalled, he served as a rodman for engineer Tony Dean, following Buck Lane's promotion to the San Francisco regional office. The CCC camps operated year-round. When winter weather curtailed activities at higher elevations of the forest, the corpsmen moved down to the lower elevations. There they built roads and firebreaks or cut firewood to heat their tents and barracks. The most ambitious projects emerged as the Mammoth Pool Road and the Ponderosa Way firebreak. The idea behind the Ponderosa Way was to create a 100-foot-wide firebreak that would cut off the foothill brush fires,

Sierra Forest Philosopher

Edward P. Steen

Ed Steen helped put the word "service" in the Forest Service. Much like many of the other early pioneers, he also set the standards for the Sierra National Forest after he became the forest guard at Musick Creek station at Shaver Lake in the 1930s.

Having worked earlier as a stream gauger and hydrographer for the Southern California Edison Company, Steen knew well the mountains of the greater Sierra Nevada. After the Big Creek hydroelectric project wound down - and after a brief spell at trapping in Alaska - Steen joined up with the Forest Service, working for some of the foremost forest personalities, such as Maurice "Ben" Benedict and his right hand man, Audie Wofford.

In 1933 Steen married a young Fresno woman, Doris Weilheimer who didn't realize that she was marrying the Forest Service as well. Only after they settled in at the small Musick Creek guard station at Shaver Lake did she discover the so-called fringe benefits. Someone was always knocking at their door, seeking information, advice or assistance, she recalled. At that time Shaver Lake was light years away from today's mountain mecca. While the summers and fire seasons were hectic times, the winters brought long period of cold and isolation, leaving the two snowbound for weeks at a time.

Steen went through many of the big fires that scorched the Sierra in the 1930s. There were hundreds of small, class A fires. There were also the big Class E fires that burned their way into his memory bank. Long before aerial tankers, water dropping helicopters and other modern communications came onto the fire fighting scene, Steen was there. He still talks about the smoke and flames of the 1931 Tollhouse Fire, the 1937 Bretz Mill fires and one of the roughest and toughest fire of all times, the 1939 Source Point Fire. "Poison oak and rattlesnakes were the big problem for the firefighters," he remembered.

Ed and Doris Steen during their early years at the Musick Guard Station.

Steen said the Source Point Fire was one of the most difficult fires he knew, burning out of control from Kinsman Flat in the San Joaquin River

Annie Keller, the Sierra's Woman of the 1930s, blazed her own trail.

Canyon toward Kaiser Ridge. "It was one heck of a fire. . . it crowned several times going up the canyon. That's one of the reasons they built the Stump Springs Road - so they could get men and equipment in there. It was often difficult and dangerous work. Fire control consumed me day and night."

During the years of the Civilian Conservation Corps, Steen worked with the corpsmen, often directing crews of up to 100 men. He remembers clearing the Ponderosa Way, a 100-foot wide fire break that stretched out along the western slope of the Sierra; and building the Dorabelle Campground and the Musick Mountain fire lookout.

"The fire guard job entailed many duties with little compensation. I wasn't considered a permanent employee because I was paid for only six or seven months of the year, at $145 a month or about $1,000 a year," he said.

For his wife, it was also a demanding, unsalaried job. "We paid $15 a month for rent. The trick was to figure out how we could eat on a $1 a day. When Ed was away on a fire or a search I had to answer the door, trying to answer all the questions that the people had. Then there was the telephone. What it really boiled down to is that they got me for free. I was something like an unpaid volunteer," Doris Steen observed years later.

The Steens remember the Sierra forest of the 1930s as a bastion of male domination - with one outstanding woman employee, Annie Keller. "She was a very loyal figure - Forest Service through and through. Annie Keller was a workhorse, one of the most dedicated persons around. While she lived near Coarsegold, she worked at both the North Fork and Shaver offices, usually running the switchboard and keeping track of everything; she was always doing something to help the forest," he recalled.

During World War II, Steen left the forest for the Marine Corps, where he served as a rifle instructor. After the war, he returned to the Sierra, working at Big Creek as a fire control specialist. Eventually he left the service to join his wife's family business - even though his heart and soul remained in the Sierra and the Forest Service.

Anthony "Tony" Dean's promised three or four months employment with the CCC in the 1930s, led to a promising career. By 1948, Dean had become director of engineering for the Forest Service at Washington, D.C. - a long ways from his Sierra foundation.

which often led to the most destructive wildfires on the forest. While Redington rangers had built a 110-mile-long firebreak through much of the brush country of the Sierra and Sequoia forests prior to World War I, the 600-mile-long Ponderosa Way ran from the Shasta National Forest on the north to the Sequoia National Forest.

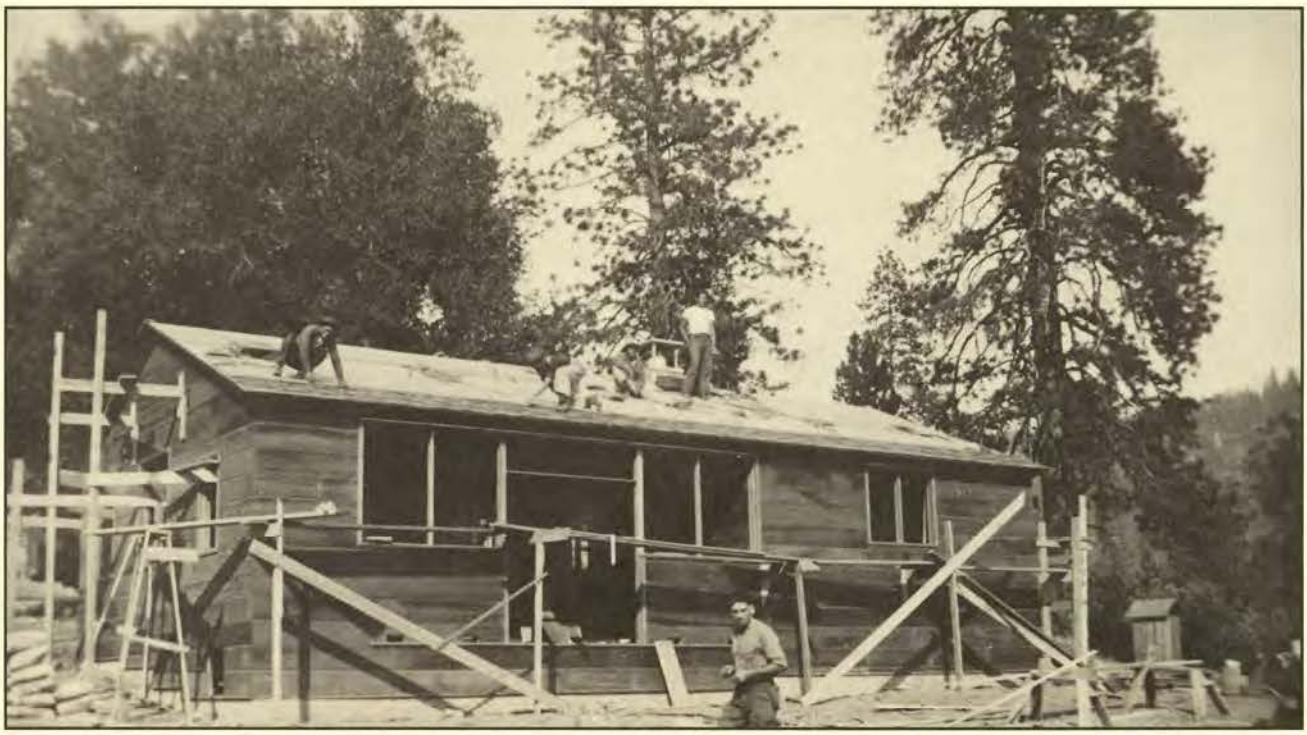
Steen remembers the year he spent working with the CCC in the very difficult task to clear a 100-foot-plus wide firebreak through the brush field above Tollhouse. Besides hand work, explosives were used to remove some of the brush and trees. At one point a young corpsman was killed in an explosion. Steen also said that thousands of pounds of arsenic was used in a futile attempt to prevent the regrowth of vegetation.

Perhaps more than anywhere, the CCC proved its worth whenever fire showed its ugly head. For the first time, the forest had the fire crews - and the tools - it needed. As a result, the number of big fires - and the suppression costs -dropped dramatically. Benedict observed that massive, early response confirmed everything that duBois, Wofford and other fire suppression officials had long been preaching. By early detection, and quick attack, small fires could be prevented from becoming big fires. Indirectly, the CCC also brought other forces to bear in the war against fire. With the arrival of the first pumper truck, Wofford recognized the need of a network of water storage tanks that could support the truck. For these he turned to a government warehouse in Fresno, where he "requisitioned" a large number of redwood storage tanks, which had been confiscated earlier from Prohibition era producers of "moonshine" or other illegal alcoholic beverages.[9]

CCC crews also upgraded the Sierra's primitive often troubled telephone system. Instead of relying on a single line and a grounded pole - a system that was suspended on trees where it was more susceptible to failure from falling limbs - the corpsmen installed an improved double line, suspended on poles. By 1937, the forest had an advanced telephone network, linking North Fork with district offices, guard stations and lookouts. In addition, it was also linked to the Stanislaus and Sequoia forests and the nearby national parks.

Leo Martin of North Fork served in the CCC from 1937 until 1941. "It was just like being in the Army. From 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. we were under the Forest Service, doing whatever they wanted us to do. But the rest of the day we went under Army command. Each camp had a full staff of cooks, doctor, teachers and recreation director. We received $30 a month but $25 of that was sent home to our parents, that left us $5 a month for personal expenses, such as a candy bar or a tube of toothpaste. Most of the work was hand labor, pick and shovel," he recalled.

The Trimmer camp was originally staffed with young men from Kentucky, but as the program evolved corpsmen from around the country came to the camp. While the program was intended to provide short-term relief with six month enlistments, Martin managed to spend nearly four years with the corps as a project assistant. He worked on numerous projects and several emergencies. Not all were forest fires. When a warm storm sent the Kings River into flood in 1937, it swept away the



Fresno District CCC crews built a lasting legacy of improvements on the Sierra, including the well-utilized Mountain Rest Fire Station.

only bridge crossing the river at Trimmer Springs. Responding to the crisis, the Forest Service and the CCC rolled up their sleeves and set up a "ferry service" to meet the emergency. By tying a rope from a still-standing pier of the wrecked bridge to a small boat, the corpsmen managed to move the boat back and forth across in the current, transporting both needed supplies and people.

At that time, the CCC also helped build the Dinkey Creek Road, extending it to Coolidge Meadows, where they built yet another campground. The work projects were not without their costs. Although comparatively accident free, three corpsmen were killed in various accidents while serving on the Sierra; during their nearly nine years stay other sustained injuries, some serious.

The Sierra needed all the help it could muster when the Source Point Fire broke out July 19, 1939, near Kinsman Flat. In short order the fire jumped the San Joaquin River and roared up the east side of the river toward Kaiser Ridge - and into Sierra fire history. Hundreds of men were pressed into the battle in what quickly became a regional fire. Even the presence of hundreds of CCC firefighters failed to stem the fire's advance. Southern California Edison Company and the Forest Service Blister Rust Control camps in Fresno and Madera counties committed their people to the fire lines, knowing their power plants around Big Creek were on the firing line.[10]

Musick Creek fire guard Ed Steen of Shaver Lake recalled that the humidity at the time was only 15 percent, but the major problem was the extended up-canyon winds that whipped the flames to hundred-foot heights. At various times, Southern California Edison Company's power plants around Big Creek were threatened. On the west side of the river, where the fire had been started, apparently by a negligent fisherman, Forest Service firefighters led by District Ranger Ed Madson were able to gain control of the blaze within three days. But on the east side, the fire raged on for days. The Source Point Fire became so threatening the regional office assumed control. On no less than three occasions the fire jumped fire lines that had been paid for in sweat and smoke. Four times it crowned. At its peak, 1,000 firefighters were involved. At night the glow from the fire could be seen in Clovis and Fresno. For the Huntington Lake cabin owners and campers - and others in its path - the fire was nothing short of terrifying. At one point the in-

Supervisor Benedict and the CCC pushed the 193A7 construction of the Emory Wishon-Bass Lake Airport, seeking to slow wildfires and insect infestations.

ferno threatened the fire camp set up at West Kaiser, forcing its relocation to Daulton Meadows. To keep the fire from spreading and to expedite fire suppression efforts, the Stump Springs Road was cut around Kaiser Peak. When the winds finally subsided, they left the canyon choked with smoke, obscuring visibility and making breathing difficult.[11]

The fire scene was exacerbated by two other major fires burning not far away, the Quartz Mountain and Green Mountain fires. On July 23, 1939, The Fresno Bee reported the three fires had strained suppression resources statewide. "Crown Fire Is Raging in Big Timber," the headlines read. "Suppression Crews Rushed Over Kaiser Pass Into Daulton Creek Area - G Men Investigate." For days the Source Point Fire roared on. Several firefighters were overcome by smoke or heat, including Orland Bartholomew, the Huntington Lake fire guard who had arrived at the onset and battled the blaze for two days before collapsing. District Ranger Edgar Westfall also suffered lasting effects from the fire.

In their battle against the blaze, the firefighters used every tool they could find. With an airplane from the Bass Lake airport, fire control officer Audie Wofford went aloft and then dropped small short wave radio units to the ground crews. He then scouted the fire from the air, relaying the direction of the burn and the hot spots to crews below. The radios also were installed at Shuteye Peak to provide additional fire information. About 30 of the 10 meter portable radios - each weighing about six pounds - were utilized by the fire crews. At the same time, the forest inaugurated a new fire danger rating system, consisting of current weather observations, humidity, wind velocity and fuel moisture. Once again, the Sierra forest was pioneering new frontiers.[12]

Over the years, the CCC was tested by wildfires on numerous occasions. Nationwide 29 corpsmen were killed fighting fire, although none of those fatalities occurred on the Sierra.[13] The Sierra did lose two men in an auto accident and another in a blasting accident.

Nevertheless, the CCC had a lasting impact on many of the young corpsmen. In 1941, a North Fork newspaper reported the CCC accomplishments. "Since the establishment of the Civilian Conservation Corps camps in 1933, many improvements have been made in the Sierra National Forest in the development of its natural resources. In eight years, more than a million man days have been worked by the enrolles in the many CCC camps throughout the forest. Sixteen bridges have

been constructed; 240 miles of roads made; 20 miles of new trail; 90 miles of fire line added, 62 buildings and lookout towers finished; 145 miles of telephone lines strung; and improvements made on 70 different campgrounds.

"In addition to the new work done, maintenance work was carried on 1,000 miles of roads and trails; 550 miles of telephone line; 130 miles of fire line; general maintenance of all public campgrounds; and an average of 10,000 man-days spent each season in forest fires. Besides the above mentioned accomplishments, the CCC boys have worked on insect control on 30,000 acres of valuable timber; planted 85,000 seedlings; put in 30,000 man days on eradication for control of the white pine blister rust; and 70,000 man days have been spent on research and experimentation, such as the San Joaquin Experimental Range, and the North Fork Erosions Control Plots."[14]

While each session was intended to last only six months, many of the young men re-enlisted - if they qualified and if there was an opening. Some stayed around to build their own careers with the Forest Service and the Sierra National Forest. With gradual recovery of the American economy along with the outbreak of World War II, the camps were closed and many of the corpsmen went off to war. The only drawback to the program showed up later when the program was phased out and the Forest Service found itself with millions of dollars in improvements but with no appropriations for repairs or maintenance.

"We started these camps in March or April of 1933, and they were abandoned in 1941. All of the work projects were under Forest Service supervision, and the camps were operated by the military. Work crews were turned over to us for our various projects; both the military and the Forest Service learned to have a great respect for each other. The program on the whole was a tremendous thing and a great many of the foresters in our organization were boys who got their early training and their first yen for the forest as CCC enrolles," Benedict wrote.

Both Forest Service and CCC officials observed that Benedict was one of the few forest officials who "really capitalized on the CCC program."[15] The veteran supervisor not only saw the need, but seized on the opportunity to utilize the human resource to meet some of the needs of the

Forest guard Orland Bartholomew stands outside the Huntington Lake Guard Station during the heavy winter of 1938.

Baptism by Fire

"Dad" Prochaska

Of all those whose lives who have been shaped by the Sierra National Forest, few can match the experiences of Adolph "Dad" Prochaska. For 41 years, he built trails, fought fire, led search and rescues and did a little bit of everything in behalf of the Sierra.

Over time Prochaska developed a region-wide reputation for his ability to build - and hold - fire lines. One of his most exciting encounters came with the disastrous Source Point Fire, the fiery 1939 inferno that he and a handful of old timers still talk about.

"I got there on the second or third day and it was really cooking. Audie Wofford, the fire control officer, had put in two or three fire lines but they hadn't held. When I arrived he told me where he wanted my crew to put in another line."

The two men walked over to the rim of the San Joaquin River Canyon and looked down the steep hillside, about a mile downwind of the fire.

"We took a look at the spot he had in mind and then I told him that I wouldn't do it. 'You've got the wrong guy, Audie, you can't build a fire line in a rock pile in this steep canyon'," Prochaska told the veteran fire boss.

For a while Wofford insisted. But Prochaska held firm, suggesting an alternate location farther up canyon. The two men continued to argue. Finally Wofford threw up his hands in resignation. "Go ahead," he told Prochaska, "but it better hold," so the heated dialogue went.

Later that afternoon, Prochaska and about 20 Civilian Conservation Corpsmen moved over to Daulton Meadows as smoke from the fire blew over their ranks. At about 10 p.m. as the cooler nighttime temperatures slowed the fire, Prochaska's crews went to work. Using McLoeds and axes, the firefighters forced their way down the steep canyon toward the river, clearing a fire line as they went.

"The CCC were young and green kids and a little afraid, so I set them up in pairs about 100 yards apart to give them confidence. They did the clearing and I burnt after them. We worked all night, about 12 hours; by late morning we had reached the river and established a fire line that held. That was the stopping point of the fire."

Not long thereafter, the corpsmen, recognizing his fatherly ways, dubbed him "Dad," leaving Prochaska with a nickname that has endured, he explained 50 years later.

As one of the Sierra's "longest tenured temporary employee," Dad has a mountain of "tall tales." His trail reaches back to 1920 when he dropped out of Sanger High School as a teen-ager and got a job as a farmhand. As Prochaska drifted around he became acquainted with Ray and Dick Crabtree, who for many years ran a Sierra pack station. One day, while working at their Tollhouse Ranch, a ranger came by to tell the brothers that their animals were running loose on the forest. At the same time the ranger asked the three young men if they were interested in a job building trails through the high country.

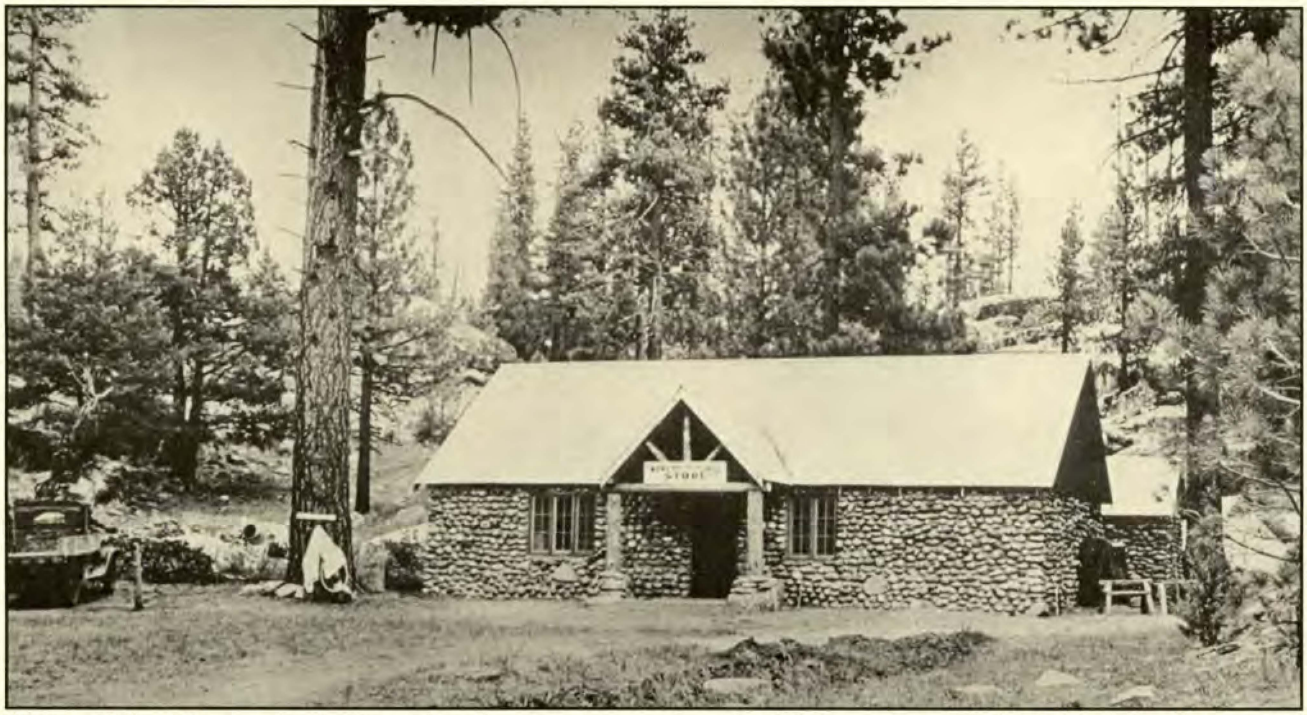
The three accepted the offer. For the next three summers, they built trails on the forest, concentrating in the Kings Canyon area. One thing led to another and eventually Prochaska got into firefighting. Summer after summer he made his way back to the forest, usually working at Dinkey Creek or Auberry. There he fell under the eyes of Ike Bays, the legendary Kings River district ranger.

"Ike was a great teacher, he taught me a lot about figuring out what a fire was going to do . . . and how to build a fire line."

In 1955 Prochaska finally gained a 10-month appointment status, serving at the Mountain Rest fire center. By 1968 the veteran employee figured he had worked long enough and retired -having served under five different Forest Supervisors.

These days the veteran firefighter pines his days away in a small cabin on the outskirts of Sanger. Almost every day he can be seen, scanning the distant mountains and his beloved Sierra.

"I was a trail builder, fire guard or smoke chaser and then a suppression crew foreman. I loved working on the Sierra. I met and worked with a lot of fine people; it was a great job in the open and right up my alley."



Walter Hill of Sanger built Mono Hot Springs resort after the CCC constructed the bridge, bathhouse and campground in the mid-1930s.

Sierra. Undoubtedly his familiarity with the forest and his years of experience in dealing with the political process had served him well in adapting the recovery program to the forest.

While Benedict enjoyed great satisfaction from the CCC projects, those accomplishments were tempered by the Congressional transfer of nearly 400,000 acres of Kings Canyon to the National Park Service in 1940. While Kings Canyon National Park had been bantered about by John Muir and the Sierra Club ever since the turn of the century, Benedict took the loss personally. In the early 1920s, the Kings Canyon high country had been proposed for inclusion in the park system. However, the measure lost because proponents wanted to name it the Theodore Roosevelt-Kings Canyon National Park - and there were too many congressmen around who still disliked the swashbuckling Roosevelt. Benedict believed that the Forest Service had done an outstanding job in administering the High Sierra Primitive Area and Kings Canyon. He also believed that the multiple use mission of the Forest Service was superior to the singular use of preservation, the Park Service's mandate.[16]

In some way he felt betrayed by a combination of events and forces. Much like Redington, Benedict had come to revere the Kings Canyon area, particularly the section around Evolution Basin and Mount Goddard. In earlier years the two had even climbed the highest peak and marveled at what some of the Sierra Club elders had claimed was the grandest view of the mountain world. The area held the Sierra's grandest landscape, and Benedict lamented its loss. Even earlier he had witnessed the transfer of Devils Postpile to the Park Service.

Benedict also was troubled by the Sierra Club's tactics of having the Forest Service lead the construction of the John Muir Trail, and then having achieved that route, to urge its transfer to the Park Service.He felt the Sierra Club was disingenuous in its efforts. And he also felt that state engineer William F. McClure, who headed up the trail work as a state project, should have remained impartial on the proposed transfer rather than side with the park service. More than anything he wondered why Agriculture Secretary Henry Wallace wasn't more protective of Forest Service land - rather than acquiesce to Interior Secretary Harold Ickes, who with the Roosevelt cabinet seemed to be making the decisions. He felt the Sierra had done

an exceptional job in managing the land. In a futile effort to have the last word, Benedict took the liberty of extending to the maximum 10-year period the grazing allotments and other special use permits within the affected area.[17]

When Leo Martin came back from the Army after World War II, he eventually migrated back to the Forest Service and North Fork, where he served as an equipment operator for many years. "It was about 1947 when I came back. I was married by that time but there was not available housing in North Fork so my wife and I moved into the old CCC barracks for a while," Martin recalled. "There were several corpsmen who came back and went to work on the forest where they had started as CCC recruits." Other corpsmen took other routes, of course.[18]

While Benedict's supervisorial years may be identified as ones of growth and development - particularly the road system he left on the Sierra - his crowning achievement may well have been the inspiration and motivation he brought to the forest. Benedict had an uncanny ability to find practical, hard-working men and women who subscribed to the "team effort." Ed Steen observed that Benedict had a way of attracting dedicated individuals -those who would go the extra mile. Besides the legendary Audie Wofford, Benedict had a half dozen other "right-hand men" on whom he could depend. They included John Hughes, who led the work on the John Muir Trail; Papa Howard, who could do about anything; and Anthony P. "Tony" Dean, who would go on to become chief engineer for the service. Back of these stalwarts stood a long line of men and women whose lives were dedicated to the Forest Service. While Benedict had often felt frustrated over his inability to stem the departure of those who left the service for better paying jobs - taking years of experience with them - he could be consoled by the inordinate number who would remain. Although many of those who served with Benedict have long crossed the final summit, the contributions of such pioneers as the Westfalls, Bartholomews, Dupzyks, McLeods, and the Sierra's unforgettable Annie Keller remain, serving as a legacy of the Benedict era.

The CCC which enabled the Forest Service to launch many of its long-envisioned management programs, also gave the road system its first major push. Besides constructing campgrounds, fire trails and lookouts, the Depression spawned work program put the Forest Highway System in high gear. It also established Benedict's career - and legacy.[19] Sixty years later, the CCC veterans from the Sierra look back fondly on those early and energetic days, proud of the efforts and their contribution - with several urging that a similar program be reinstated to address the social and environmental problems of the 1990s.

Chapter Seven

World War II Arrives

World War II brought a new and dramatic change to the Sierra National Forest. Almost overnight the forest shifted over to a war-time footing. Within a few weeks of Pearl Harbor Army units were posted at Shaver and Huntington lakes to guard against saboteurs, who it was feared might want to destroy the hydroelectric facilities so vital to the war effort. Some of the fire lookouts were opened on a year-round basis so they could serve as aircraft spotting facilities - in case the Japanese launched air attacks against vital forestlands of the West Coast. Although gas rationing curtailed much of the traditional recreational use of the forest, Forest Supervisor Maurice Benedict and his staff were busier than ever. The men of the Civilian Conservation Corps, on which Benedict had come to rely, had left the forest to join the war effort. In their absence, the Sierra had to rely on its own firefighters, augmented only by a group of conscientious objectors who had moved into the old CCC camp at North Fork.

The war effort also heightened the demand for lumber for barracks, shipyards and crates for water supplies - in accord with the government's warning that the war would require more wood than either steel or aluminum. Besides lumber, the rangeland of the forest was expected to do its patriotic duty, by providing the beef that would add muscle to the war effort.

In March of 1942, Benedict welcomed a young ranger by the name of Walter Puhn, a native of Washington and a graduate forester from the Oregon State College, who had first made his way into the service as a member of the Civilian Conservation Corps in the Pacific Northwest. Puhn had been selected as the Kings River District ranger. At that time, the U.S. Army Signal Corps from Pinedale was using the Dinkey Creek area as a training ground, having commandeered the old CCC camps at Trimmer for a temporary barracks. For Puhn and his wife, Vivian, the new assignment was a dream come true.

Their first winter was spent at the North Fork compound but as soon as the snow melted they moved to their summer office at Dinkey Creek. While living conditions were primitive by today's standards, the Puhns relished the isolation. A small generator provided enough power for a radio and a couple of light bulbs. For a refrigerator they relied on a wet burlap bag suspended over a screened wooden frame. At that time, Puhn remembered, the service was providing the time-honored horses, although he still faced his most difficult task in having to shoe the hayburners.

Although gas rationing limited travel, some valley campers and Camp Fresno guests still managed to make their way to Dinkey Creek. Once they arrived at their campsite or cabins there was little automotive travel. Nearby, Camp Fresno, the city-owned summer camp, continued to operate, providing refuge and relief from the dismal news of the day. During the warm summer days, Puhn found his own relief and refreshment in what became the family's own swimming hole. At that time, Puhn recalled, farm families would bring boxes of vegetables and fruits to the mountains; often they would share produce with Puhn and his staff. "We got so much that we started canning it on the wood stove . . . and by the time we headed back to Trimmer in the fall we had more food than we had started with," his wife recalled.

The war brought other changes to the forest as well. Tungsten was needed for the war effort - and the Sierra responded. Puhn witnessed the development of extensive tungsten mining at Garnet Dyke, Mining Town Meadow and at the Strawberry Tung-

The U.S. Army guarded Shaver Lake dam for possible sabotage. The onset of World War II forced many changes on the Sierra National Forest.

sten Mine - two of which were located on his district. "Scrap drives benefited the war effort and the forest as well. Wherever we found scrap metal or old tires we would pick them up and haul them down to a collection point at Trimmer . . . we really cleaned up the forest in the process," he said. "Although the forest was relatively quiet there was still plenty to do. We really enjoyed Dinkey Creek; we couldn't wait until the snow melted so we could get there and then we would stay as long as we could in the fall, recognizing that we didn't want to get snowbound back there," Puhn recalled years later.

Although the war had curtailed recreational use in the forest it did little to halt the perennial enemy - wildfires. In September 1943, the Black Rock fire exploded in the area between Balch Camp and Patterson Mountain. Puhn and his assistant, Neil Perkins, got there about the same time. Knowing that there were no trained firefighters to be had, they called upon a Signal Corp unit that was in training at Dinkey Creek. "The only thing we could do was try to slow it by backfiring, so we took off. I went one way in a pickup and he went the other on foot, setting off fuses as we went. Unfortunately, the fire came up as a crown fire between the two of us. The only thing we could do was pray.

"Neil got caught on the switchbacks. Fortunately the Signal Corps came down the mountainside as the fire came up, and he stopped the convoy and got them turned around just in time. The men in the last truck got scorched a little; but Neil wouldn't have made it if those troops and their trucks hadn't come down the hillside.

"Forest management was relatively simple at that time because we had all the specialties in ourselves . . . and we could usually make any decision on the district," Puhn recalled. At times the war came exceptionally close to the Sierra's own front line. Periodically, a military plane would lose to the Sierra's high peaks or get caught in fickle weather and crash, triggering dozens of search and rescues. The most newsworthy incident occurred in December of 1943 when a B-24 from Fresno's Hammer Field disappeared in the mountains. The following day, another B-24 engaged in searching for the first plane, also crashed, in Huntington Lake and disappeared carrying six of eight crewmen to an icy grave. Routinely the Sierra's slimmed down staff responded, assisting in the search efforts. For years after the war the wreckage of many of those military planes dotted the forest. Puhn said Forest Service personnel were involved in many of those searches. In addition, the forest lookouts were also used to spot and report all aircraft flying over the mountains.

On one occasion in 1943 Puhn and Perkins were making an inspection tour of Crown Valley when they encountered Shorty Lovelace, a colorful mountain hermit and trapper known for his string of back country cabins - and his propensity for liquor. "Shorty told us that he had seen the wreckage of a plane sticking out of the snow in the back country so we thought we should check it out." For two or three days the two rangers followed Lovelace on horseback, providing him food and the obligatory nightcap. "He knew just where the wreckage was but it was always over the next ridge. We finally realized that he was just leading us on - and dining well in the process," Puhn recalled.[1]

As District Ranger, Puhn also witnessed some "front line skirmishes" on the forest front during World War II. In August 1943, for instance, the first chain saws made their appearance on the Sierra - much to the consternation of the loggers and labor unions. Quickly battle lines were drawn over the noisy mechanical monsters that quickly sliced through logs, spewing smoke and sawdust in the process. The unions representing the loggers opposed the mechanized saws, claiming it would cut into their jobs by hastening the timber harvest. The timber operators disagreed, but by appealing to the "war effort" and the loggers' patriotism a strike was averted and the chain saw went on to become an accepted part of the logging scene. By today's standards, those first powered saws were heavy, cantankerous dinosaurs, with a seven or eight-foot drawbar that required a second person to handle the "stinger end." [2]

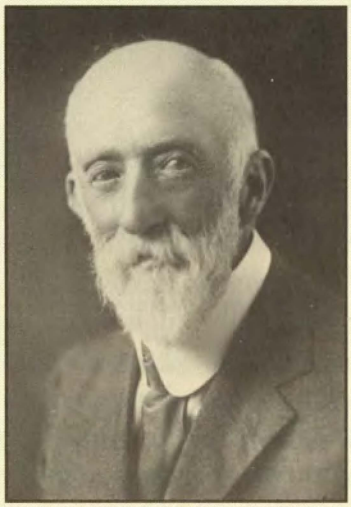
During the following summer, the high country of the Sierra and Inyo national forests became the scene of some high level maneuvering, involving some of the nation's foremost military leaders. Under the strictest of military secrecy, General H. "Hap" Arnold - the same man who had helped inaugurate the Sierra's first aerial patrols years earlier - and General George C. Marshall slipped away from the Pentagon to reconnoiter the fishing in the high country of the forest. High level plans were made for the high country outing. Departing from Bishop the generals and Roy Boothe, by then the Supervisor of the Inyo National Forest, along with Arnold's old friend, Joe Elliott, the Supervisor of the Lassen National Forest, made their way to Mammoth Lakes. From there the group horsebacked into the High Sierra, setting up camp the first night at Purple Lake. At the sound of an airplane the following morning, two smoke bombs were set off to mark their encampment. Soon a plane appeared overhead. After circling a few times, the pilot dropped down to tree top level and tossed out the morning paper and the military mail. The Sierra secrecy and security had held.

Soon thereafter the mountain militia moved

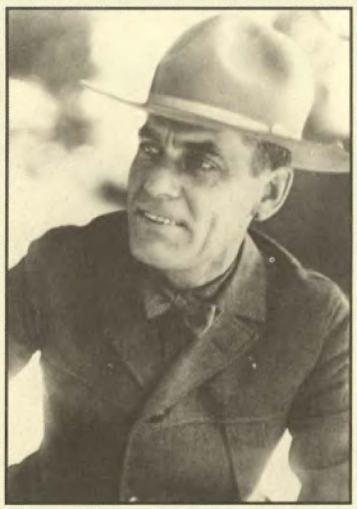
Far removed from the World War II front lines, the North Fork Supervisor's Office took on a quiet profile following a winter's whitewashing in 1942.

Sierra Supervisors

Past and Present



Charles Howard Shinn, 1902-1911, implemented a dream.



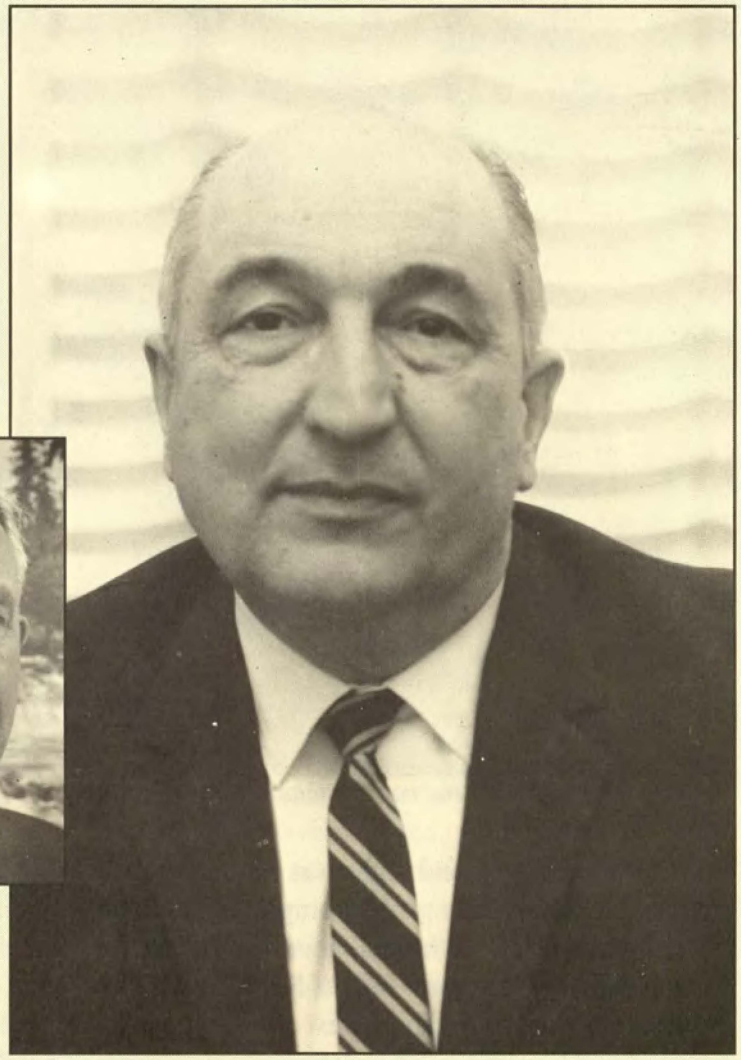
Paul G. Redington, 1912-1916, sought the higher ground.

Maurice A. Benedict, 1916-1944, set the mold for supervisors.

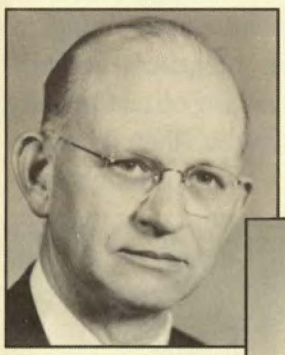
Over the past century, the Sierra National Forest has known 11 different supervisors. Each one brought a different perspective and a management style. All shared the common goal of a better forest, capable of sustaining itself and meeting the needs of a growing nation.

Sotero Muniz, 1969-1978, pushed forest planning.

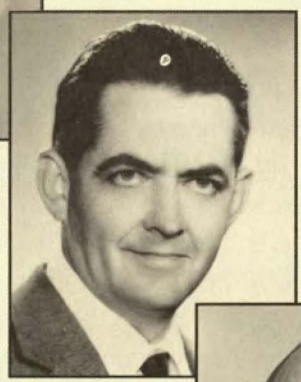
Kermit W. Linstedt, 1944-48, led the Sierra through war and peace.



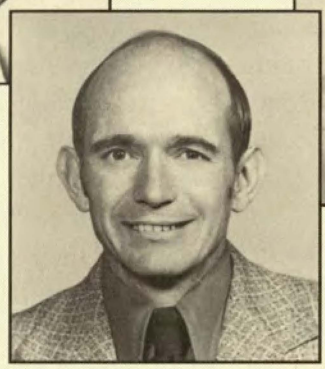
Walter Puhn, 1957-69, guided the wilderness era.



Byron B. Beattie, 1948-54, struggled with North Fork move.



Leon R. Thomas, 1954-57, witnessed the Sierra's fury.



Zane C. Smith Jr., 1969-70, short termer - fast tracker.

Richard Stauber, 1978-1984, sustained the Sierra dream.

James Boynton 1985-?, shared a new forest perspective.

Rangers Myron "Bill" Horn and Richard Roseberry made the Sierra's long-standing snow surveys in the winter of 1943.

on. The camp the second night was set in no less a place than Gene Tully's old stomping ground of Tully Hole, which Boothe described as a "beautiful little meadow on the north fork of Fish Creek." For Boothe, who had started his forest career on the Sierra and had known the legendary Tully first hand, the "mountain maneuvers" were something akin to "old home week." From their base camp there, the military might of the United States went out to do battle with the fish of the High Sierra. Boothe fished with General Arnold while Elliott accompanied General Marshall, and according to Boothe "both generals making satisfactory catches."

The following morning the reconnaissance plane reappeared, this time dropping "important communiques from Washington." Unfortunately the parcel missed its intended mark, landing instead on the steep mountainside, which required a rugged, two-hour search before it could be retrieved.

The military mission pushed on, forcing its way over Silver Divide and down to Mono Creek, where two laid-back days were spent in rest and relaxation - long before "R-and-R" became a military byword. The following day the generals made their highest encampment at Hilgard Meadow. Here a larger air drop was made the following morning, including an inflatable boat that the generals had ordered up so they might test the fishing on nearby Lake Italy. While the lake fishing was less than desirable; Boothe noted that the morning's air drop brought news that "most satisfactory progress was being made on all war fronts." With that good news, the generals went out and engaged the fish once more. Boothe reported that the four star generals displayed "skill with the fly rod, or in negotiating rugged and even dangerous sections of trail . . . shaving under difficult conditions and bathing their feet in cold streams - all to prove that the U.S.A. is still a democratic world." Finally, after a week in the mountains, the generals retreated to the Pentagon -taking the two Supervisors back to Washington D.C. as their guests for an extended tour of the nation's capital.[3]

Meanwhile, back in the trenches at North Fork, Maurice "Ben" Benedict continued to work away. For the past two years the veteran Supervisor had held essentially two jobs, one as Forest Supervisor and the other as the chairman of the War Production Board in Fresno. In some ways that job had become more demanding, requiring all too frequent trips to Fresno and Madera. One of his big battles was to

insure that the valley agriculture continued to feed the war effort. He was hailed as the "Raisin Czar" for his leadership in convincing valley grape growers to turn their product into raisins rather than wine since raisins were more crucial to the war effort. He was also involved with the Chamber of Commerce at both Fresno and Madera. While the veteran forester had long resisted efforts to move his office to Fresno, his frequent travel almost justified such a relocation, but Benedict felt it would demean his position to move to the flats of Fresno.

But Benedict had also grown weary and was experiencing health problems. The former All-American athlete could no longer run up the steps at the North Fork compound. The veteran Supervisor had also seen Audie Wofford and many of his other longtime compatriots retire. So in September 1944, Benedict stepped down and retired as perhaps the longest-reigning Forest Supervisor in the nation. Having served as Supervisor for 28 years and five as Assistant Supervisor, Benedict had become something of an institution throughout the state.

While he could look back with a great sense of accomplishment, Benedict was apparently frustrated in not having completed all the tasks he had set out to do. Although his achievements had been many, he took personally the loss of Kings Canyon to the National Park Service. He was also troubled by his inability to complete "his road system," particularly Forest Highway 100, the trans-Sierra highway up the San Joaquin River Canyon to Mammoth Pass. At his retirement banquet hundreds of guests showed up at Fresno's Californian Hotel to honor the veteran Supervisor. When The Fresno Bee reported the event, it noted that during his tenure the government had allocated more than four million dollars to the forest - most of which eventually filtered down to valley businesses. The paper also observed that when Benedict started his career the forest had only 316 miles of roads and trails but when he left it counted over 1,200 miles.[4]

In his last official statement, the veteran Supervisor warned of the serious overcutting and lack of reforestation in privately held stands, and urged corrective action. "If the forests are to make their fullest contribution to the national welfare, it will be necessary to provide far better care and management than they thus far have received. An economy of abundance depends upon maintaining the production of national resources at a high level. Yet today, after decades of agitation and educational effort, most of the cutting on private forest lands, which supply more

The 1944 arrival of the first chain saw on the Sierra caused a major labor controversy, which was only placated by a call to war-time patriotism.

The demand for lumber during World War II brought new and improved skidding to the timber lands of the Sierra National Forest.

than 90 percent of the annual output of forest product, is done without regard to the future production of the resources, and one third of the private forest area of the country still is without organized fire protection," he said.[5]

Benedict was followed by Kermit W. Linstedt, the first native-born Californian to become Supervisor of the Sierra. As a graduate of Oregon State University, he had served at various forests and positions in the Pacific Northwest since joining the service 20 years earlier. On his early inspections of the forest Linstedt was troubled by what he saw. The meadows were trampled; grass was too well cropped; and erosion was showing up in some of the streambeds. On questioning his staff members, Linstead was told that Benedict had purposely overstocked the range, trying to push some of the animals to the higher meadows that were under grazed. Benedict felt that if the animals could be induced to use these underutilized meadows he could increase meat production from the forest and thereby aid the war effort. The stockmen were only too willing to help, and brought in additional animals. But Benedict's plan backfired. Instead of dispersing and moving some of the cattle to the higher meadows, the animals simply congregated in the front country ranges, where they overstocked and impacted the range.

Linstedt could see the damage and reacted, ordering his staff to make a study and determine the number of animals that the forest might accommodate. In its report, the staff noted the carrying capacity of the Sierra grazing ranges had not been adjusted since 1922 and were badly out of date. While exceptions could be made for the war, the grazing levels were more than could be tolerated. The report recommended a marked reduction from 88,947 a.m. (animal months) - the accepted measure of range utilization - to 54,211 a.m. While recognizing that figure might be sustainable, Linstedt concluded that the meadows could not recover unless there were further reductions. The supervisor further reduced the figure to 46,196 a.m. - or nearly half -producing immediate complaints from the cattlemen.[6]

In following in Benedict's footsteps, Linstedt had a particularly rough trail to follow. For starters, he was perceived as the newcomer - the outsider - who represented the change that many of those who worked with a Forest Supervisor didn't want to see occur. Despite a wide range of professional skills in natural resources management, Linstedt did not have Benedict's expertise in working with people. In a couple of cases he got started off on the wrong foot. In one of his first forest fires near Nippinawasee in 1945, for instance, Linstedt

got poor marks after he castigated the fire boss for not putting men to work digging a trench for the fire camp latrine. The fire boss defended his action, feeling that it was more important to have the men on the fire line - rather than fighting a rear-guard action. The unidentified fire boss' decision was vindicated later when the fire changed direction and reversed its path, burning over the camp. "Linstedt was a hard person to get to know and wasn't too well liked by the employees and local people. He ignored the employees if he saw them after hours in North Fork," one long-time employee observed.[7]

When World War II came to a sudden conclusion with the atomic bombing of Japan, the repercussions reached all the way to the forests of America. All of a sudden the nation faced the mountainous task of making the transition from war to peace. On the Sierra and other national forests, the Supervisor's staff became caught up in "post-war planning," seeking ways to meet the needs of the returning servicemen and a nation at peace.

Foremost among the concerns was supplying lumber for the anticipated housing boom, and to provide jobs for those returning to or beginning their careers with the Forest Service. The pent-up demand for housing and recreation soon became apparent. Within two years the forest was again echoing with the sounds of work and play. Some of the returning servicemen rejoined the Forest Service to help plan timber sales. Others went into the woods with their war surplus trucks and new fangled chain saws and began cutting away at both the problem and the promise. By 1949, for instance, the timber harvest had climbed to its all-time high of 23 million board feet from off the Sierra.

In the post-war era, the national forests turned another new leaf when they began waging psychological warfare against their one nemesis, wildfires. At the national level, an orphaned cub bear that had been rescued from a fire in New Mexico began showing up as Smokey Bear. Gradually Smokey and his burning message moved onto the Sierra and all the other national forests, and then into the classrooms and community centers everywhere. Over time Smokey would become one the best-known symbols in the war against wildfire, signaling the beginning of a cooperative fire prevention program with federal and state agencies.[8]

Linstedt's most vexing problem was not of his own making; instead it involved Benedict's ghost and the regional office's long-sought relocating of the Supervisor's office from North Fork to Fresno.

After World War II, the pent-up demand for recreation sent a new wave of campers to Dorabelle and other campgrounds on the Sierra National Forest.

Walter Puhn's Sierra Roots

The Sierra In Transition

Walter Puhn's forest roots reach way back to the transitional days of the Forest Service when he helped set the mold for the service.

In 1929, while attending Oregon State College, Puhn latched onto a summer job as a fire lookout on the Siuslaw National Forest of Oregon. The salary, he recalled, was an astronomical $105 a month. But after graduating as a forester in 1932 - at the time the Great Depression had laid waste to the nation's economy - he discovered there were no jobs whatsoever.

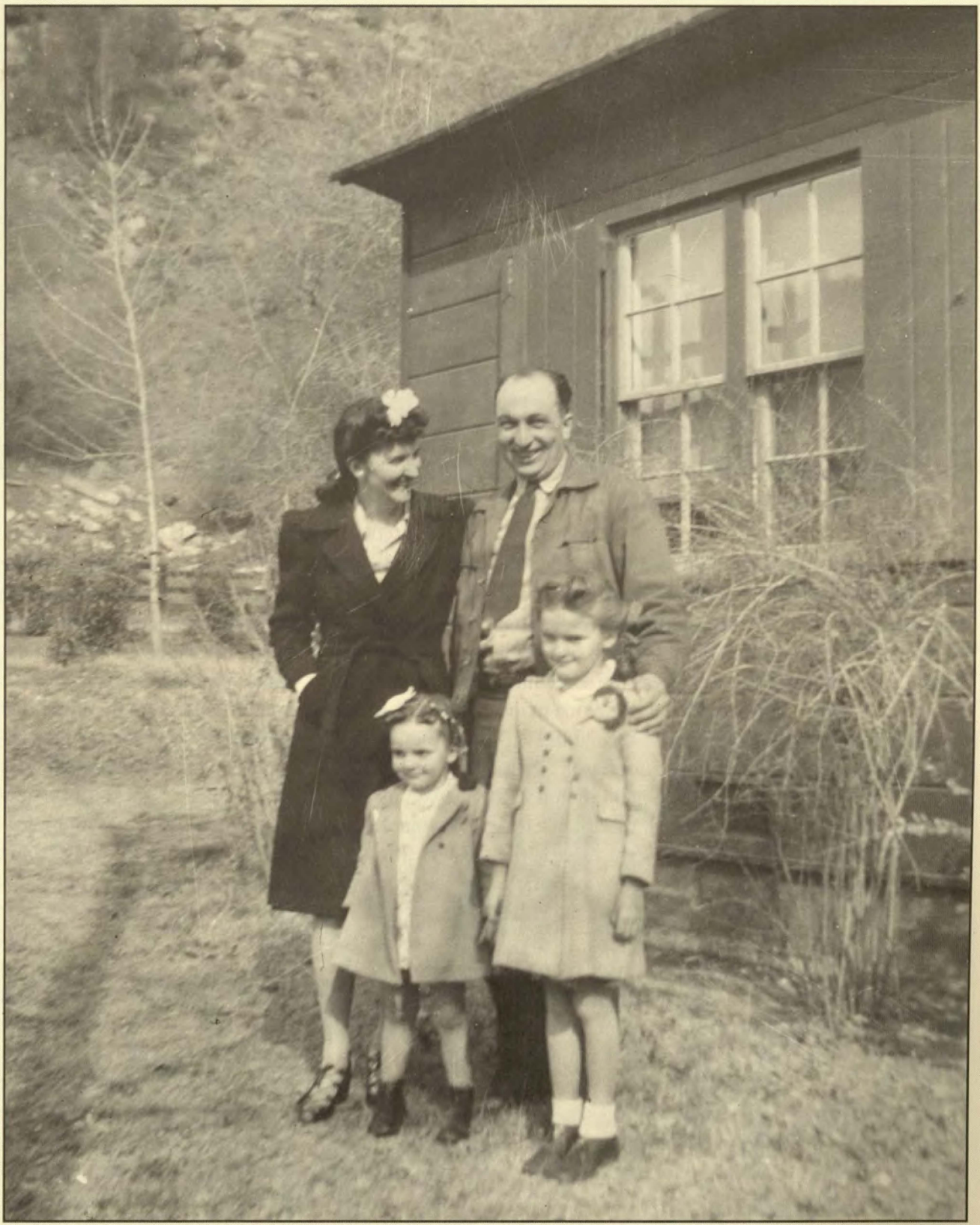
Undismayed, Puhn cast about, finally joining the Civilian Conservation Corps on the Olympic National Forest - not as a forester but as an office boy. His diligence and dedication soon paid off and within a year he was picked up by the Forest Service as a trail worker. Then there was more hard work. Over the next decade, Puhn moved up the trail - and the Forest Service ladder as well. He became a recreation planner on the Lassen National Forest. From there he moved on to the El Dorado and then the Los Padres before going to the Mono National Forest as a District Ranger for the newly created Carson District.

In 1942, in the midst of World War II, Puhn moved again, to become the Kings River District Ranger on the Sierra, serving under the legendary Supervisor Maurice Benedict. During the first winter he and his wife moved into the North Fork compound before moving to Dinkey Creek for the summer - at a time when the forest was virtually empty of visitors. The following winter they moved down to the district office at Trimmer Springs. After three years of the Kings River District, Puhn was transferred to the Los Padres. He then moved to the Cleveland National Forest, where he served as Forest Supervisor for nearly five years. Then in January of 1957, he returned to the Sierra to become the Sierra's seventh Supervisor. From there Puhn went on to serve 12 years in that post and become the second longest tenured Supervisor on the Sierra after Benedict.

From his lengthy exposure he has a unique perspective of the Sierra. Of all the forces that have shaped the destiny of the forest, Puhn believes the emergence of hydro-electric power had more impact than anything. "Without all those reservoirs, the Sierra would be a vastly different forest. The reservoirs provide much of the recreation component that now defines much of the forest."

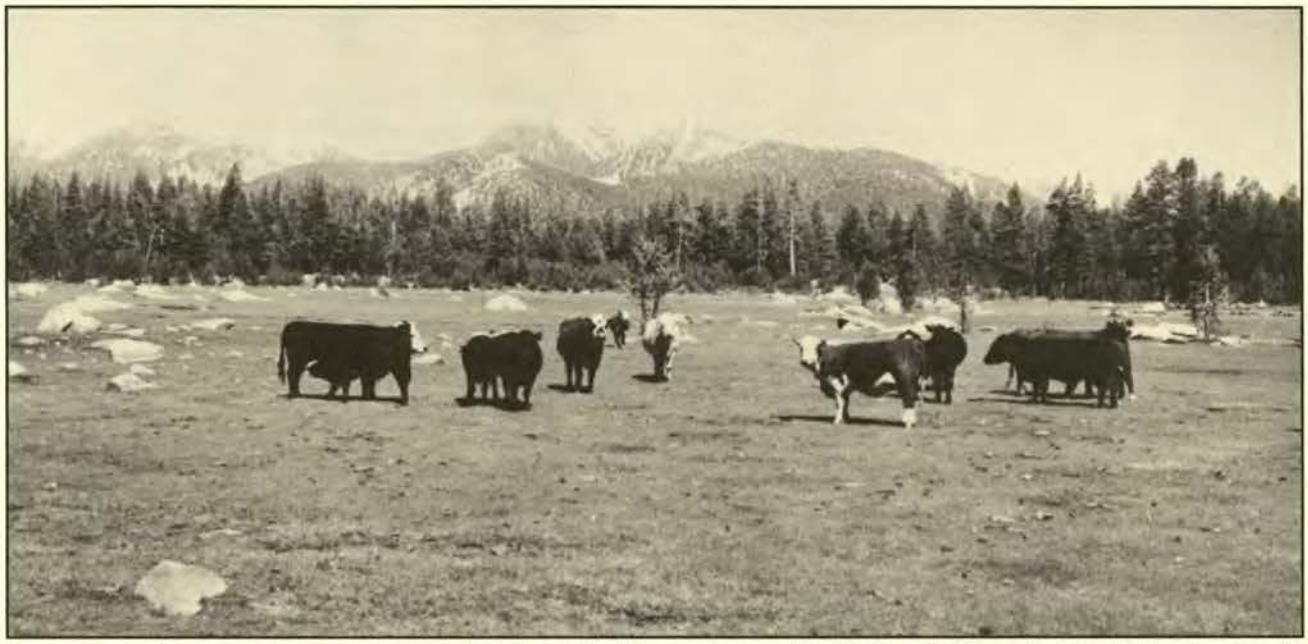
Puhn's forest and life's partner, his wife, Vivian, hailed from a time when a ranger's wife often determined his career, based on what she could contribute to the equation. "There was always something for the wives to do. During those early fires we used to ride out with our husbands, helping them by directing traffic and getting the fire fighters to the right area. When they were away on a fire or some other business, we were in charge. When people had car trouble or some other emergency they always came to the ranger's house. If they were wet or lost we would feed them and get them warm. We were the unpaid front line of the Forest Service. It was different then. In the "30s there was the ranger, then the fire guard and then the CCC. We were one big family that took care of one another. At times it was a tough life but it was also a lot of fun," she reminisced in 1992.

The two Puhns no longer chase wild fires or respond to forest emergencies, but they are still in love with the forest and the people who make up the Forest Service, she added.



Walter Puhn and his girls at their 1943 Trimmer Springs residence.

In looking back over a lifetime of involvement, Puhn feels he had the best of all times. "Forest management was relatively simple at that time because we had all the specialties in ourselves and we could usually make any decision on the district," he recalled. "It's much more difficult today."



Attempts to increase the meat production from the Sierra during World War II forced a marked reduction in grazing after World War II.

In some respects, Linstedt had been blind-sided by the controversy, knowing comparatively little about the continuing effort to push the Fresno relocation. In the San Francisco office the relocation had been bantered about so long that it had become something of an in house joke. For over 20 years, no one in the regional office had been about to challenge the veteran Benedict. For the long-time Supervisor the location of "his office" represented a point of honor, a level of respect. Benedict had seen himself as "a forest ranger from the mountains." Or even more to the point, he didn't want to - or wouldn't - become a "Fresno flatlander" - because it would demean his position as Forest Supervisor. [9]

But with Benedict retired, the regional office concluded that there was no reason to delay any longer. Since the days Charles and Julia Shinn had reached out to the townsfolk, North Fork had forged an identity that was inextricably linked to the Forest Service headquarters. For many townfolks the forest headquarters and North Fork were one and inseparable. When rumors emerged that Linstedt was leading the relocation movement, he was greeted with instant opposition. For a while the Forest Service withdrew, thinking the opposition would subside. When he broached the subject again, the community became more upset and made plans to defend the outposts. As the issue became known, it became more heated and the Forest Service found itself in the middle of a growing controversy. Linstedt and the regional office retreated to reconnoiter their position.

About a year later, in 1948, Byron B. Beattie, a native of Sanger, was appointed supervisor of the Sierra. A former recreation officer on the Pineridge District, he had come back to the Sierra after serving on two other forests. His advancement was viewed by some Sierra employees as part of a new personnel policy to promote promising young foresters through the system and thereby avoid some of the problems associated with Benedict's entrenchment. The Sierra needed some "new blood," they were told. As someone who had served on the forest before, Beattie had some advantage. Unlike Linstedt, he knew his way around the forest. And he wasn't reluctant to get out on the forest or the firelines. Even then Beattie encountered some resistance. Around the North Fork compound, some employees felt his sole mission was to make the move to Fresno. For other service employees, Beattie, while admittedly smart and capable, lacked the social skills and the ability to motivate people. "He liked to show his authority. He would call the shop or warehouse to bring his government sedan, gassed up, down to the office. Whoever took the car down had to walk back. Beattie wouldn't take them back to their job," recalled John Hawksworth,

a long-time Forest Service employee from North Fork.

While there is no record to substantiate the Fresno relocation scenario, what is well documented is the grief the relocation eventually caused Beattie and his wife. Early in 1952, as the Fresno relocation was announced, the townsfolk became exercised once more. The North Fork Citizens Committee was formed to fight the move. At one point, Dr. W.R. Cohlan, the town doctor and one of the leaders of the opposition movement, stormed into Beattie's office and protested the move in the most vocal of terms. He demanded to know of Beattie where the decision to move was made and by whom. And he wanted to know who could rescind the recommendation to relocate. "You are not moving. We are going to use everything to stop you, even personal attacks on Forest Service personnel," Cohlan vowed.[10]

As the situation deteriorated, the regional office ordered an investigation and rushed to Beattie's defense. Assistant Regional Forester George S. James reported that the "leaders of the opposition movement have gone to extreme means in order to gain their ends. Also, their threat of personal attack has gone so far as to be pure character assassination . . . During my first visit, by far the majority of people with whom we talked said, in effect, 'We don't want to hurt Byron because we like him and his wife.' Out of those same mouths we hear that Byron is arrogant, a liar, a poor manager and all of the things possible in their desire to destroy a man. Unfortunately Mrs. Beattie is also being included and subject to the same kind of local treatment," James wrote.[11]

As the proposed move became more controversial, Beattie retreated to his office and downplayed the controversy. He then had his administrative assistant lease the second floor of an office building at Inyo and Van Ness avenues in downtown Fresno. As that news leaked back to North Fork, the opposition surfaced once more. Once the lease was concluded, Supervisor Beattie summoned his employees to a July 1, 1952, staff meeting - and notified them they would report to work after the July Fourth holiday - at Fresno. "It was a shock treatment approach, but it worked. Everyone was caught by surprise and after the first week they just seemed to accept the decision," recalled one long-time Sierra employee.

John Hawksworth said the Fresno relocation was little more than a public relations move - that caused a lot of problems. "Beattie was brought in to be the hatchet man. The people in North Fork were

In 1958, three former Sierra supervisors, Kermit Linstedt, Byron Beattie and Leon Thomas, pose with Supervisor Walter Puhn, left, near Mile High Vista.

The relocation of the transmission lines around Huntington Lake in the 1950s sparked a difference of opinion between the Sierra and regional office of the Forest Service

very upset about it. Dr. Cohlan even threatened Beattie if he persisted in making the move. It got pretty hot there for a while. The actual move apparently produced some additional problems. In moving the records from North Fork to Fresno they lost the payroll records out of one of the trucks, and no one got paid from July 1 until the end of September. One North Fork grocery store went bankrupt. We had to borrow money and charge groceries for our personal homes. As a result, a lot of the employees couldn't make their payments for cars and other personal belongings, and they ended up moving their cars on to the compound so they couldn't be repossessed," Hawksworth reminisced.[12]

Glen Dickey, Beattie's administrative assistant, refuted many of the charges. He maintained that the Fresno move went relatively well and that there were few problems. He pointed out that only 18 or 20 positions were involved. Supporting services and functions such as fire and maintenance remained at North Fork. As he saw the transfer, the Fresno relocation was designed to improve forest management and efficiency, recognizing that the vast majority of forest users and visitors were within that sphere of influence.

Despite what his critics claimed, Beattie was not to be intimidated. He was a battler - and one of the last Supervisors to show up on every major fire - despite the fact that he had a severe physical aversion to smoke, poison oak and rattlesnakes, the firefighters' nemesis. Although he and his wife had been mentally and physically affected by the protests over the Fresno move, Beattie found some relief there. At about the same time he was also on the firing line in the early 1950s, when Madera County Health Department forced closure of Bass Lake campground because of health hazards.

In 1954, after serving six years, Beattie was promoted to assistant fire control officer in Washington, D.C - where he could escape the fiery inferno he had created at North Fork. His stay on the Sierra had been stressful. After four years of the Sierra, he was succeeded by Leon R. Thomas, a native of Morgan Hill, who had made his way around the Pacific Northwest for the preceding 13 years.

Thomas was also to be tested by the elements of forest management. At the onset of 1956, he and the Sierra experienced the severest weather since the service started keeping records. At North Fork, for example, the January precipitation measured 25.27

inches - exceeding the record January set back in 1914, when the compound received 23.98 inches. Along the front country of the forest, particularly within the Kings River district, the damage to forest facilities was extensive. On January 5, The Fresno Bee reported preliminary estimates of the flood damage to roads, trails and bridges was $425,000. Supervisor Thomas said the road between Black Rock and Coolidge Meadow had been washed out, and considerable rock and earth slides could be seen from the air. He also warned that there was undoubtedly more damage in other areas of the forest as well as the High Sierra, but any full assessment couldn't be made until the spring. "From every indication the damage was the worst in the history of the forest," Thomas added.[13]

Bill Hansen, who served as Thomas' staff officer and who had also worked for Byron Beattie, said there was a marked difference in the two Supervisors. "Lee (Thomas) was an easy-going, relaxed supervisor and a good boss as long as you did your job. On the other hand Byron, while very smart, had a way of irritating people. He had the habit of anticipating people's questions and answering before the person had finished asking the question," Hansen recalled.[14]

Thomas' time on the Sierra was highlighted further by increases in the timber harvest, dam and road building, along with additional recreational use and development. But it also had its share of controversy. One particularly high-charged issue involved the relocation of Southern California Edison's distribution lines around Huntington Lake. It was an issue that brought the Sierra staff to loggerheads with the San Francisco regional office. The utility wanted to upgrade the system and minimize the visual intrusion as much as possible by taking the power lines along the shoreline on the north side of the lake. While the Sierra concurred with that approach, the regional office felt the lines needed to be moved up the hillside and away from the lake. Thomas responded that the swath of the right of way would then be more visible and intrusive. For a time both sides refused to budge. Finally the regional office relented —with the understanding that if there were any major objections from the visiting public over the following 25 years, the lines would have to be relocated to the regional office's alignment -and at the expense of the utility. Nearly 40 years later, Hansen pointed out, the power lines were still in the "preferred" place.[15]

During this period, the Sierra also experienced the first of a series of head-on collisions with four-wheel-drive enthusiasts. As the first off-road vehicles came onto the forest after the war, the operators began pushing farther and farther into the back country. The Dinkey Lakes became one of the more popular destinations. As use increased so did littering and soil disturbances. Recognizing the impact that the vehicles were having, particularly around the lakes and adjacent lands, Thomas sought regulations that required the vehicles be "out of sight and out of sound" of any of the lakes. Most of the drivers recognized the problem and compiled.

The post-war era also brought the return of some scientists and other forest experts to the Sierra. In the fall of 1955, Gordon L. Huntington allied with the University of California's Department of Soils and Plant Nutrition, along with Jack R. Fisher of the Forest Service began work on what was described as the most comprehensive soils and plant survey ever attempted in the mountains, covering both Sierra and Sequoia national forests. The two scientists projected that the work would take several years but would end up costing the taxpayer only 10 cents an acre.[16]

Hansen recalled that during the 1950s, the Sierra gave birth to four new reservoirs and three new power generating plants. By that time, the Sierra-generated Federal Power Commission had been replaced with a new agency, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. While the commission had issue the basic permits for the new facilities, there were dozens of supplements or amendments to those permits, which caused Thomas's staff member a lot of extra work. Once again, the Sierra forest's reputation as the home of the hardest working waters in the world had been reaffirmed.

Chapter Eight

Growth and Development

When Walter Puhn returned to the Sierra National Forest to become the seventh Forest Supervisor in 1957, it was a far different forest than the one he had known as a district ranger during World War II.

The changes were everywhere, led by the return of the visiting public, who were once again out in the forest, camping, hunting, fishing and enjoying the mountains. The post-war forest had reached all the way to Fresno, where yet another "new Supervisor's office" had been established on east Tulare Street, replacing the earlier Fresno locations at Van Ness Avenue and Inyo Street. Another big change had touched his old Kings River district office at Trimmer Springs, which had disappeared under the waters of Pine Flat Reservoir.

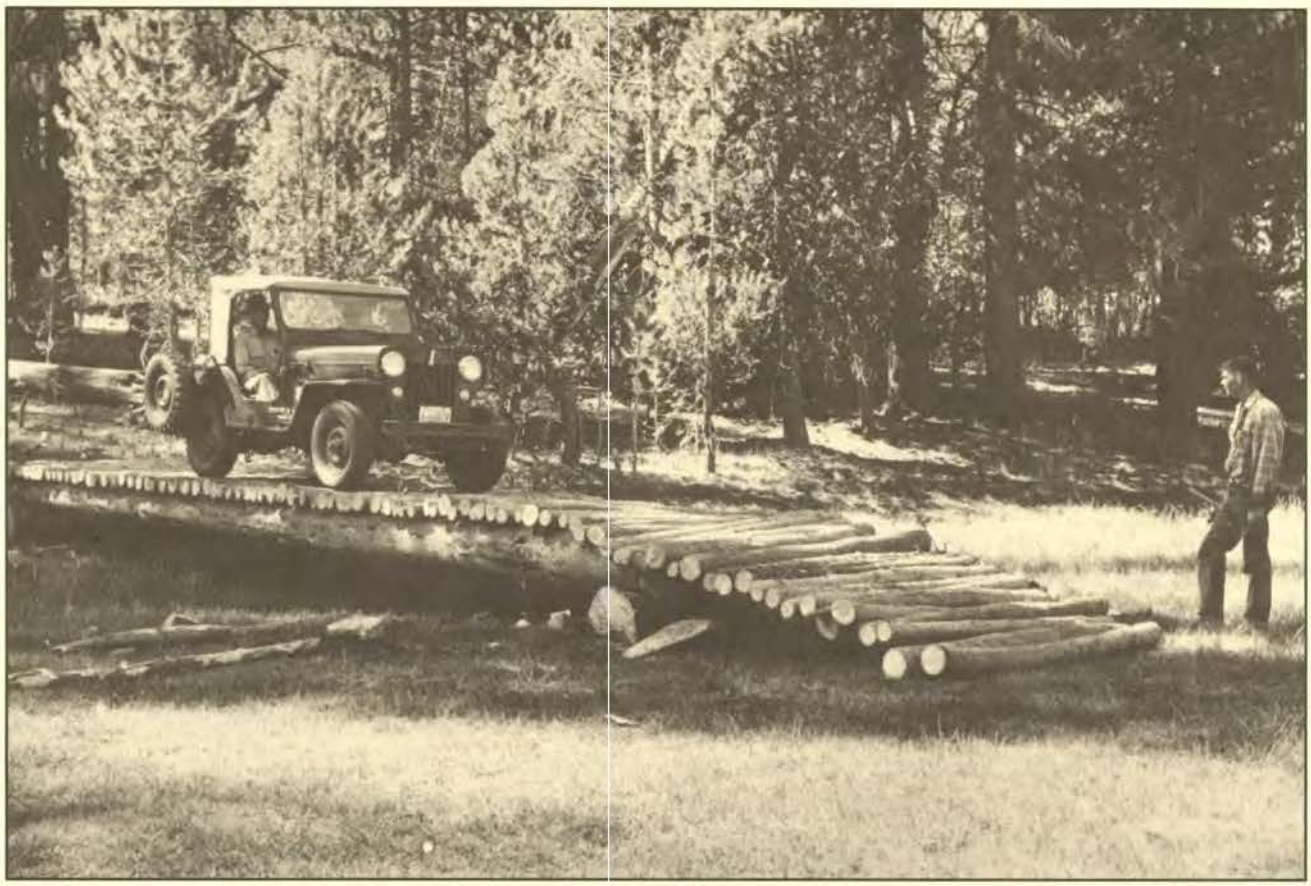
Elsewhere on the forest, four new reservoirs were either filling, under construction or on the drawing board, including Mammoth Pool, Lake Edison, Wishon and Courtright reservoirs; hydroelectric plants were also generating new energy. Across the forest a dozen different sawmills were also cutting away, trying to provide the lumber for the continuing postwar housing boom. Other, more far reaching changes were also enroute, led by the completion of all-weather roads linking Bass Lake and North Fork and another from Shaver Lake to Huntington Lake. While bypassing Big Creek, the new Highway 168 over Tamarack Summit provided better access to a new major ski area, China Peak.

In the postwar years, the Sierra and the other national forests experienced dramatic increases in just about everything, Puhn observed. He could see that recreational use and commodity production had boomed. From his 1943 assignment until his return in 1957, the allowable harvest from the forest had shot up from about 21 million board feet to 125 million board feet, reflecting the postwar demands being placed on the forest. "There were big increases in everything except grazing. There was bigger demand for timber, recreation, hydro and camping, and the Forest Service responded with staffing and funding," he recalled.[1]

At the popular "watering holes," places like Shaver, Huntington and Bass lakes, recreational boating and camping had exploded. At Bass Lake, the Forest Service was struggling to install a waste water treatment system, after the over-used campgrounds around the lake had to be closed down because of health hazards. Another hazard arrived in the early 1960s when the Hell's Angels motorcycle club arrived en masse, scattering family campers and posing yet another new problem for Puhn's staff.

The end of the war was also followed by a growing interest in off highway vehicle recreation along with backpacking and back country use. As he surveyed the impending changes, Puhn realized that the national forest could not accommodate all the vast and varied interests, and that some conflicting uses were inevitable. The off-road vehicle problem had arrived on the forest in the aftermath of the war, when thousands of war surplus Jeeps or four-wheel drive vehicles passed into private hands - some for as little as $100 each. As the new owners looked around for their own proving grounds they turned to the national forests. Not long afterward, a small motorized scooter known as tote-goats sped onto the forest, bringing additional concerns - and potential conflicting uses. Many of the new owners felt they should be able to use the forest at will, going wherever they wanted to go.

"The four-wheel drive clubs and the tote-



Off-highway recreation made big inroads during the post-World War II period, ushering in a new era of land use controls on the Sierra National Forest.

goaters claimed they were conservationists. A few black sheep were tearing up the meadows. Others were forcing their way into the back country lakes and littering those areas. We knew that unrestricted use would be detrimental to the forest and the watershed, so we tried to develop a plan that would meet the basic needs of the off-road user and still protect the forest. We eventually won, but it was pretty hot at times."[2]

In March 1958 the Sierra staff announced a ban on motorized cross country travel, covering nearly 500,000 acres in the mid and high elevations of the forest. Under those restrictions, vehicular travel on the forest was to be limited to established roads, parking areas and a half dozen designated off-highway vehicle ways that were commonly called "jeep roads." [3]

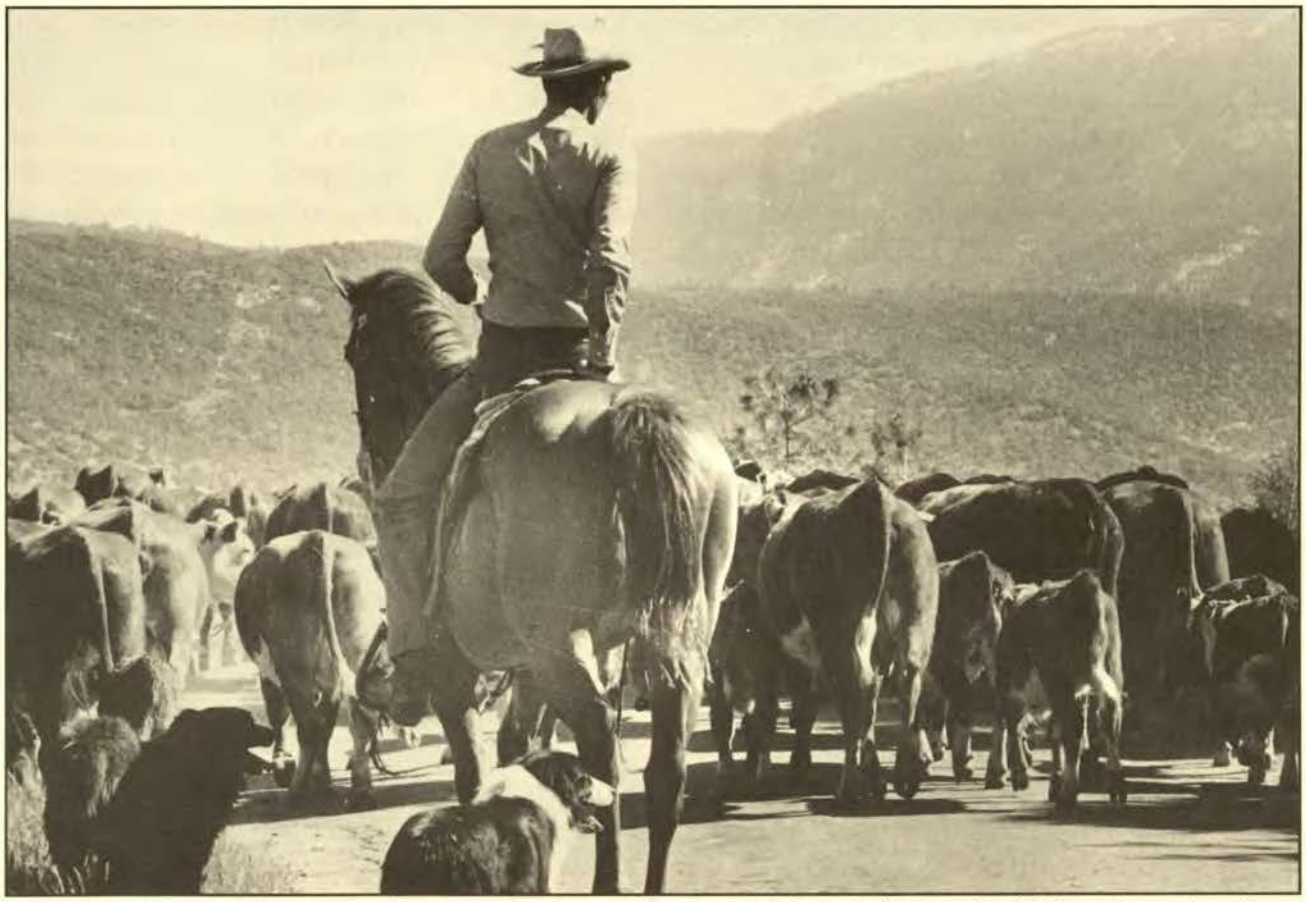
Early on Puhn had recognized that all the national forests, but particularly those in booming California, would be challenged by forces of growth and development. From the very creation of the forest reserve in 1893 until World War II, he noted, the administration of the national forest had been primarily one of custodianship - based on utilitarian conservation. These were the days of "hands-on" management, with timber sales and other activities under the control of the District Ranger. But as war and the postwar boom unfolded, the demand for timber and other forest commodities remained high, bringing new forces to bear. Gradually, the custodial era gave way to the management era, which first showed itself in the annual timber harvest. About that time, he observed, the Washington office began pushing the Sierra and the other "timber forests" for more production. "They wanted to meet the housing situation. We were given 'goals' - not 'targets' - for the timber harvest."

Along with that push came the need for more roads, and again the service responded by pushing deeper and deeper into remote areas of the forest. At first few people paid any attention to what was going on. Even the inroads generated by four new reservoirs evoked little concern. But slowly more and more people began speaking out against what

they saw as growing trend toward intensive management of the forest for commodity production, particularly timber. For observers such as Floyd Lobree, a veteran conservationist and member of the Fresno Tehipite Chapter of the Sierra Club, the forests were losing their character. He and other critics worried that the Forest Service was not only compromising the visual appearance of the forest, but also its long range health.

The first collision on the Sierra came when hikers, horsemen and other back country visitors began encountering increased motorized intrusion into previously unroaded areas by both recreational users and loggers. Recognizing potential conflict, Puhn felt it was necessary to recognize a full spectrum of forest uses and values - specifically by protecting the watershed and the more scenic or natural areas. The concept of protecting scenic areas was relatively new to the Forest Service. The idea had been around for a long time, starting with nearby Yosemite, which had been set aside as a state preserve in 1864 and which, along with Sequoia and Grant Grove, had matured into national parks by 1890. Additional support could be traced to the Forest Service's direct involvement in the construction of the John Muir Trail, which was, essentially, a wilderness experience. By the 1920s, Aldo Leopold of the University of California and then associated with the Forest Service, further advanced the idea of wilderness areas within national forests. During a 1927 speech at Fresno, Chief Forester W.B. Greeley urged a cautious road building approach in the High Sierra "in order to keep a large mountain wilderness area in its natural state as a playground for the people of California."[4] By 1931, with the designation of the High Sierra and Mount Dana Minarets Primitive Areas the wilderness seed began to germinate.

Nationwide other forces were at work. The transfer of Kings Canyon to the National Park Service in 1940 further advanced the concept of scenic or wilderness preservation within the greater Sierra Nevada. In the postwar era, the Sierra Club returned to the wilderness front, concentrating much of its



Cattle grazing was about the only use of the Sierra that remained static during the 1960s, when other forest activities increased dramatically.

energies on wilderness preservation. "The fate of the Sierra Nevada was closely connected with the fate of wilderness everywhere. Whatever affected the Sierra was happening elsewhere as well," club president Edgar Wayburn observed.[5]

While much of that focus had been directed toward new national parks, the Forest Service could no longer escape the debate. For some forest administrations, the concept of preserving forest lands for themselves belonged somewhere else than with an organization dedicated to utilitarian conservation. In some respects, even the passage of the controversial Multiple Use-Sustained Yield Act in 1960 focused on the wilderness issue. While designed to maintain the traditional commodity production from the national forests, that is, timber, grazing and water, the legislation acknowledged that "the establishment and maintenance of areas of wilderness are consistent" with the intent of the act. In making the first statutory recognition of wilderness, the bill also banned any further encroachment into the existing primitive or wild areas.[6] Puhn didn't particularly care for the Sustained Yield Act, figuring it would preclude the agency's ability to meet changing needs and conditions on the forest.

Having recognized the wilderness movement, Puhn also saw the need to provide for some kind of balance between commodity production and resource protection. Shortly after his arrival on the Sierra, he had encouraged High Sierra District Ranger Arn Snyder to formulate a wilderness management plan for the Sierra. That action, coinciding with Puhn's ban on cross-country motorized travel, underscored the growing movement toward wild land protection.

"The matter of unrestricted overland jeep travel was a particularly hot issue at the time, and with the enthusiastic help of staff and rangers, I set about to establish a program of controls. It was the toughest battle I have ever gone through. The congressmen and Regional Forester {Charles} Connaughton can attest to its roughness because both were deluged with protests".

The howl and cry caused by his ban moved across the country - all the way to Washington D.C. - but with the help of his staff, Puhn soon gained control of the travel scene. "We had, I believe, established the first successful controls on overland vehicles in the national forests, fully 15 years before such effort was supported by executive order for all public lands."

In Connaughton, Puhn found a strong ally for wilderness protection. During his years in the regional office, Connaughton had become a long-time admirer and user of the Sierra high country. Almost every summer during the 1950s and early 1960s, Connaughton could be found on one of Shorty Cunningham's horses, exploring the High Sierra Wild Area. "Connaughton loved the high country; he came back season after season." Puhn recalled.

The emergence of a wilderness ethic on the Sierra still took some strange and unusual turns. While the off-road ban was being cussed and discussed, another controversy arose in the form of the long-envisioned Mammoth Pass highway.

Proponents of such a trans-Sierra route, led by the state Chamber of Commerce and Madera County had long advocated a route south of Yosemite National Park. So had long-time Forest Supervisor Maurice Benedict. In particular they pointed to a 1928 state highway plan which had proposed six trans-Sierra routes south of Tioga Pass. The Mammoth Pass route, also known as the Minarets Summit road, was intended to run up the western rim of the San Joaquin Canyon from North Fork to the Devils Postpile, crossing the crest at either Minarets Summit or Mammoth Pass. These same advocates recalled that in the 1930s, when the Mount Dana-Minarets and High Sierra wild areas had been established, a corridor for the road had been set aside. As a result, most of the conservation organizations had accepted the inevitability of such a highway. Even the Sierra Club had resigned itself to the Mammoth Pass alignment, feeling it would be the least offensive of the other proposed trans-Sierra routes.[7]

To promote the highway, the backers of the route began staging promotional tours just as Puhn came onto the forest as Supervisor. The press, politicians and the other good movers and shakers of the day were invited to an extended pack trip over the scenic mountain route. Not unexpectedly, none of the conservation groups were invited. However not everyone was convinced that the road would be a good idea.

The China Peak ski area - now Sierra Summit - has provided winter recreation to Sierra National Forest users since 1958.

Left to right, Supervisor Walter Puhn, Regional Forester Charles Connaugton, Herb Stone, Phil Pister of the Department of Fish and Game and Arch Mahon, Mono County supervisor toured Sierra wilderness areas in 1964.

Eventually, an ad hoc organization, the Sierra Natural Resources Committee, was founded in Fresno to fight the proposed road. The organizers, Bob Board, Tom Cooper and George Ballis, had a long association with the Sierra Club, but were unhappy with the club's acceptance or acquiescence to the trans-Sierra highway. "We wanted an outside organization that wasn't known, yet one that would offer another viewpoint and stop the project. At that time, Ballis was working as a free-lance writer for Sunset magazine. In that capacity he had been invited to go on one of the earlier promotional trips organized by the Madera Chamber of Commerce. On that trip he learned their strategy, and we were able to point out the problems. . . such as who was going to maintain the road and keep it clear of snow in the winter," Board related.[8]

As the proposal moved along, the state Chamber of Commerce in 1959 organized a Mammoth Road Inspection Party, inviting 27 proponents or possible advocates for a four-day auto and horseback trip over the proposed route. Puhn and his district ranger were invited. Representatives of the Los Angeles Times, The Fresno Bee, and Madera Tribune also were included. Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas, one of the foremost conservation advocates in the nation, was invited to participate in the trans-Sierra trip but declined. Once again, no representatives from any of the conservation organizations were asked to participate. By the time the group left North Fork on Sept. 16, the outing had grown to 32 participants. The group motored to Clover Meadow where they camped the first night. After leaving Clover Meadow on horseback the following morning the weather began to deteriorate. It began raining and then snowing, turning the intended Indian summer outing into an ordeal. The snow continued into the third day, forcing the participants to make a hasty exit - and otherwise putting a cold chill over both the outing and the road project itself.[9]

Puhn had attempted to steer a middle route with regard to the proposal - and succeeded - ac-

"Here Comes The Brass"

The story behind the badge.

The "ranger" badges worn by the men and women of the Sierra National Forest have a rich and colorful heritage, one that reflects part of the proud tradition of the Forest Service.

When the Sierra Forest Reserve came onto the scene in 1893, the initial boundary markers were posted by the members of the U.S. Cavalry. The first reserve rangers didn't arrive until 1898 - and when they did it was without uniforms, badges or other credentials. The lack of identification posed no small problem for the rangers trying to enforce the reserve's new and unpopular regulations.

Once the Sierra rangers learned badges were available they began pressing the superintendent at Fresno for their own. The request went to Washington D.C.. After some prodding the rangers finally received the small round silver badge of their calling. Only then did they discovered the downside of the badge. "That badge became a red flag to some of the stockmen who didn't like the idea of a reserve," veteran ranger Gene Tully observed.

Frank Ealand displays his collection of Forest Service badges and other ensigna.

The story goes that Tully wore his badge under the flap of his shirt pocket or suspenders - so it couldn't be seen - until he wanted it to be seen. It was just a precaution against some vengeful stockman or irate squatter who didn't like the reserve and the government's new regulations.

Frank Ealand, a Sierra National Forest employee and badge collector, said that many changes have occurred over the years. As the reserves became the Forest Service the round badge gave way to a shield shaped badge. In 1908, an early ranger sketched the profile on a tree on a cigarette paper that made its way on the face of the badge - and stayed. As the badge matured, additional changes were incorporated, including size, style and color or metallic composition. The early women employees received a little-bitsy button of a badge. Fire guards or the old "sub rangers" were cast in nickel or pewter, that is, silver in color, while the supervisor and district rangers had a brass-colored badges. This difference often promoted the once familiar warning to work crews or distant stations:

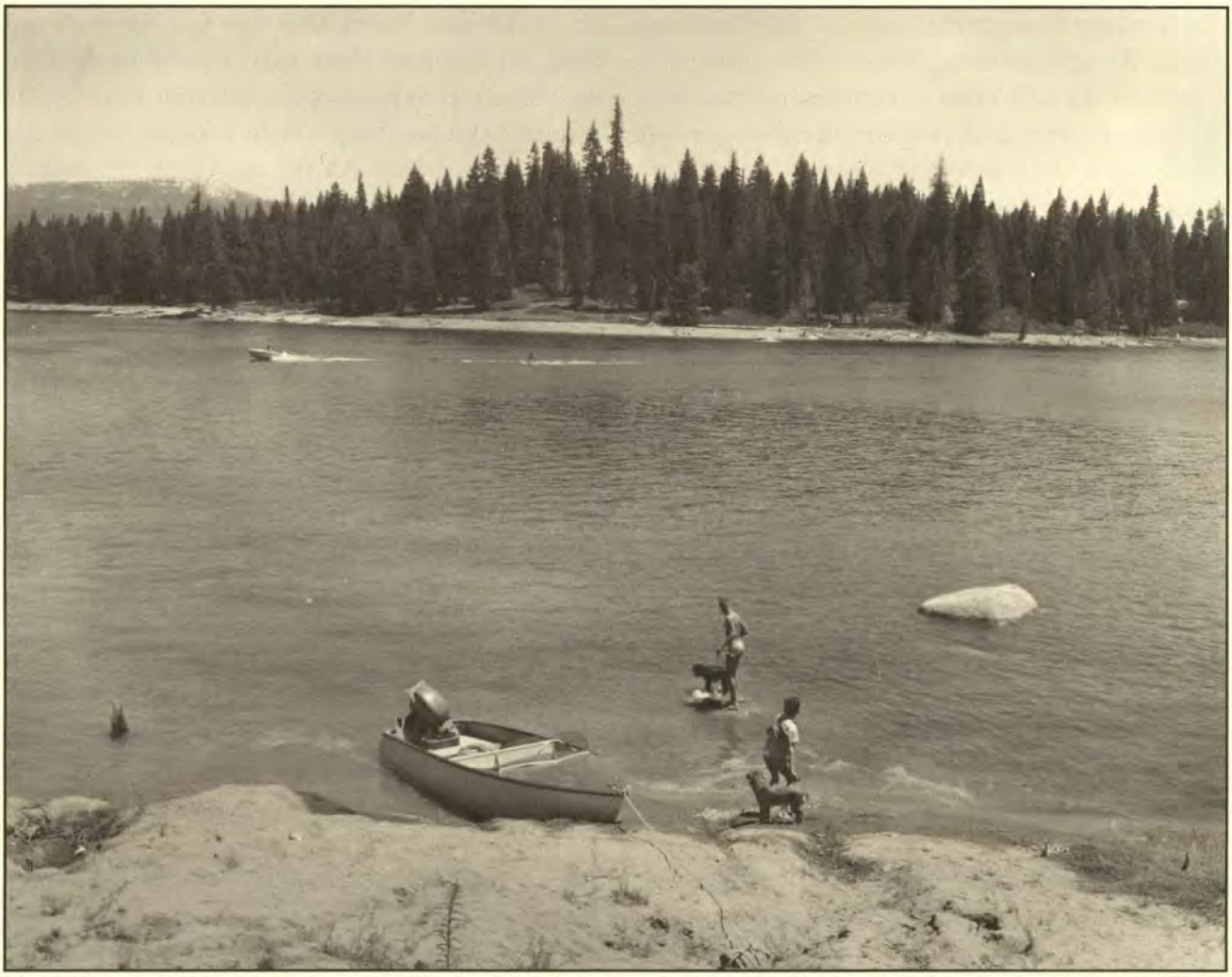
"Here comes The Brass."

cording to Board. The fact that both sides were accusing him of favoring their adversary gave him encouragement that he was steering a middle course. "Our initial position toward the highway was to be neutral - that we could take it or leave it," Puhn pointed out. But as public concern over the road mounted, the Sierra Natural Resources Committee picked up support. Finally the Sierra Club took another look at the proposal and figured they might be able to stop the project. Their concern was prompted in no small way by the on-going widening and realignment of the Tioga Pass Road in Yosemite -which had turned into another trans-Sierra controversy.[10]

Shortly thereafter, the Sierra Club organized its own tour of the corridor and invited Jack Deinema, the new regional forester, to make the trip. During the course of that outing a reporter from The Fresno Bee asked Deinema for his opinion on the road. Believing that he had to say something, Deinema said the Forest Service had "no position" or opinion, which had the effect of withdrawing any support for the project. There was little justification for such a trans-Sierra highway for the use or protection of the forest. On the other hand, if it was determined that the road would serve local or state interests - as an integral part of the state highway system - then the service would not oppose it.

While proponents cited the contributions such a road would make to national defense and San Joaquin Valley agriculture, the conservationists were not to be denied. They began mounting a campaign to preserve the corridor between the Mount Dana-Minarets and High Sierra wild areas by including the areas in new Forest Service wilderness areas. They continued to cite the costs and related maintenance problems of such a road. At

In the unending battle with wildfires, the Sierra National Forest originated the first helitack crew in the 1962.



Since its construction in the late 1930s, the Dorabelle Campground at Shaver Lake has been popular with both campers and boaters.

the same time advancements in air transportation and the rush for freeway funding elsewhere managed to stall the road movement. Without Forest Service support the project gradually lost momentum, Puhn observed.

As the wilderness debate mounted, the Sierra Forest found itself at the forefront of a growing environmental movement. Along with Joe Radel, Supervisor of the Inyo National Forest during the 1960s, Puhn tried to meet the demand for wilderness protection. "We had the High Sierra and Mount Dana-Minarets Primitive Areas and we tried to anticipate the legislation that finally emerged as the Wilderness Act. By 1962, Snyder had completed his 61-page plan for managing the High Sierra Wild Area, placing the Sierra at the front of the wilderness movement. "We also made our own land allocation plan. We had it so wired with support from all directions that the chief could do little more than recommend the Secretary of Agriculture approve it. Our plan worked out so well that we had no opposition from anybody . . . except that when I went back to Washington, D.C,. one of the staff members said we were taking over the authority of the chief."[11]

The pace quickened with the 1960 election of President John F. Kennedy, whose New Frontier administration brought several strong conservationists or mountaineers to the fore, including Secretary of Agriculture Orville Freeman, Interior Secretary Stewart Udall and Defense Secretary Robert McNamara.

A national wilderness bill was introduced but got hung up in the House of Representatives. While prospects for passage of the bill seemed favorable, the legislation got hung up over the San Gorgonio area of the San Bernardino National For-

est. The Forest Service assembled a special task force of wilderness managers to write the policy and regulations for administering the act. The group was composed of a half dozen wilderness managers from across the country, including the Sierra's expert Arn Snyder, one of the foremost pioneers at that time. Snyder saw the wilderness issue as a major challenge and change in management direction for the agency, whose basic mission had long been directed toward conservation and sustained use rather than preservation. Three years before passage of the 1964 Wilderness Act, Snyder had completed his Wilderness Area Management Report, enabling the Sierra National Forest to again become one of the pioneering forces in the development of wilderness management guidelines.

As the local participants jockeyed for position, the wilderness advocates began coming out of the woodwork. In Fresno, the Sierra Club's Tehipite Chapter rallied around an aging Floyd Lobree and a young mountain climber by the name of George Whitmore. They had a long list of concerns, led by some protection and expansion of the Mount Dana-Minarets and High Sierra wild areas, and the transfer of Tehipite Valley to Kings Canyon National Park. At that time there was comparatively little opposition to those proposals except from valley farmers who had long sought another dam in the upper Kings River. For the most part, the loggers and timber operators saw the wilderness effort concentrated in the high country, where there was little harvest potential - or as was commonly bantered around, "wilderness on the rocks."

But in 1962, with the completion of Pacific Gas and Electric Company's Wishon and Courtright reservoirs, the Forest Service began looking for more timber and turned to the Rancheria area to the east. The planned extension of the McKinley Grove road along with a new, improved Kaiser Pass road brought conservationists to the edges of their seats. They looked on the new roads as a direct challenge to the status quo of the forest, setting the stage for another potential wilderness area and more controversy.

As debate over potential wilderness areas mounted, former forest guard Ed Steen, now sepa-

A helicopter prepares to lift a helitorch that was used burn brush in the Sugarloaf conversion project, starting in the 1960s.

The popular Florence Lake ferry discharges forest visitors in the late 1970s. Lake Edison provides similar ferry services.

rated from the Forest Service and serving as both the conservation chairman of the Tehipite Chapter and as a member of the Fresno Natural History Association, didn't like what he saw. Forming his own ad hoc group, the Kings River Conservationists, he came out strongly against any further mechanized intrusion into Kings River country. "Wilderness boundaries are the least important of our conservation problems; we have abused our range lands, which must be reclaimed; we have allowed our forest lands to be invaded by vast brush fields, which must be reforested; we are distressed by our failure to cope with fire and insects - they still defy our techniques; and lastly, unrestrained human breeding will render nugatory our efforts to preserve a portion of our heritage in its natural state.[12]

The passage of the 1964 Wilderness Act brought other forces to bear. While the act designated both the Minarets and John Muir wilderness areas - and nearly two dozen other areas across the nation - it left the selection process unfinished. Instead it outlined a review process whereby those roadless areas that might meet the definition of wilderness could be studied for the subsequent inclusion into the national wilderness system. In addition, the act specified that potential additions to the system be made with "public involvement" so as to include the concerns of the "local people," and not be limited to those from industry or the Forest Service.

When the timber industry saw the list of potential wilderness areas, it became concerned and began to react. The various factions began drawing defensive lines on the map. Then they turned to the Forest Service for support. When that failed they went to their local congressmen. In the valley, the debate over wilderness was also shaped by the growing controversy over Walt Disney's proposal to develop Mineral King Valley into a major ski area. As Congress started to deal with the wilderness allocations, Puhn's initial plan began to break down. Along the way proponents and opponents of wilderness began going directly to the seat of power in the pursuit of their own agendas, changing forest management forever. "Those that used to deal with the district ranger or the Supervisor began bypassing the Forest Service

Old Rangers Don't Die

They Just Move On

By many measures Arn Snyder was the last of the real Sierra rangers - a true wilderness ranger.

In the 18 years between 1952 and 1970, Snyder had what many considered the ultimate job as the High Sierra District Ranger. It was something of a labor or love - and more. Every summer he would chase the retreating snows over 9,200-foot Kaiser Pass, trying to establish himself before the summer visitors descended on the back country.

From the onset, Snyder could see that his main job was to protect the fragile wilderness and still provide for public use and enjoyment. From late May to late October, he was in the high country, trying to save the wilderness - and the wilderness users. In the late 1950s Snyder launched the first wilderness management program, trying to provide a strategy that would disperse use and minimize the human impact on the land.

In some respects he was well ahead of his time, long before the 1964 Wilderness Act was enacted. The job was as vast and varied as the area itself. The tough part was the extended period away from his family. The great part was, well, High Sierra itself. Through the years, he ran into a mountain of adventures, highlighted by bears, rattlesnakes, searches and rescues and all kinds of people stories.

Snyder's trail to the high country reaches out a long ways. A graduate of the University of California School of Forestry, Snyder did get going until after World War II and the U.S. Navy. Then he went to work on the San Joaquin Experimental Range near O'Neals. "I was kind of a 'horsey person' and that's what got me started. After working on the experimental range I moved to the Mendocino National Forest. Then I went on to the Modoc. . . those were horsey forests, also." Then he hit the Six Rivers and Lassen forest before coming to High Sierra.

He was often defensive of his district. Woe be it to those who would deface "his mountains." One time, when he caught two boys spray painting a rock face, he melted out justice on the spot. Commandeering their packs and fishing rods, Snyder sent the two to the valley for paint remover and wire brushes. When, and only when the graffiti was removed could the two reclaim their equipment.

He was one of those "no-nonsense" kind of persons - someone who could see the forest and the trees.

There was a time in 1964, when a troop of Boy Scouts laid waste to a stand of young aspens near Hutchinson Meadow while working on their antiquated "cutting and lashing" merit badge. After discovering the devastation and learning of the offenders, Snyder reacted. Digging in his spurs and he raced up the mountainside in pursuit of the misguided scouts and their leader. In 1965, in recognition of his efforts toward wilderness protection, Snyder was awarded the prestigious American Motors Conservation Award. Even after he left the service, Snyder found it hard to get the Sierra out of his weathered hide. For many years thereafter he worked with the Three Forest Interpretive Association, helping to spread the message of responsible forestry. Even then Snyder made time to retrace his trail and ride the range.

Ranger Arn Snyder and his horse enjoy the fringe benefits of French Canyon during a 1966 patrol.

and going directly to congress. It bothered me that they didn't want to fight it out with me," said Puhn.

Little could he or the Forest Service have anticipated the rough trail the wilderness debate would take. The Congressional review of the wilderness debate was to stretch out for nearly 20 years in a roadless-area review process known as RARE I and RARE II that finally resulted in the California Wilderness Act of 1984.

Puhn drew heat on other fronts as well - real heat. In the long, hot summer of 1961, dozens of minor fires and three major wildfires hit the Sierra. The Harlow, Basin and Haslett fires were not to be forgotten, burning over 65,000 acres in all. While the Harlow burned primarily on state lands between Mariposa and Oakhurst, national forest crews and land were involved. In one two-hour period, the Harlow burned over 19,000 acres, destroying the foothill community of Ahwahnee and sending up a convection column of heat and smoke associated with an atomic bomb. Before the Harlow was controlled it had burned over 43,000 acres of foothills, killing two people and causing millions of dollars in damage.

As Puhn observed the aerial tankers hitting the Harlow Fire that day, his thoughts went back to 1935 when he had participated in the first efforts toward aerial suppression on the Los Padres National Forest. "We had Region Five's first ever airplane, and we tried dumping five gallon cans of water on an intentionally set fire by pushing the cans out of the airplane. . . which posed a hazard to those on the ground as well. After the first run the plane headed back for another load of water to the airport that was located nearby. But the plane didn't return and our 'prescribed' fire began getting out of hand . . . forcing us to go after it and put it down. Only then did we see a big cloud of dust off on the horizon and then learned that the plane had crashed on takeoff," he said.

After the war and after moving to the Mendocino National Forest, he saw war-surplus Stearman biplanes pick up the aerial attack. Similar missions were made from the Bass Lake airport on the Sierra. By the time Puhn returned to the Sierra in 1957, an air tanker base had been established at the Fresno Air Terminal in cooperation with the California Department of Forestry. The Stearman crop dusters had given way to larger planes, modified military aircraft such as the TBM-Avengers and Black Widow fighters that were pressing the aerial attack.

Besides the Harlow Fire, 1961 turned out to be one long, hot summer for the Sierra crews. Besides the usual rash of minor fires, two additional major fires, the Basin and Haslett fires became big fires. Tragedy struck the Sierra fire crews, on August 2, 1962, when four members of a Jerseydale suppression crew were burned to death after their pumper truck was caught up in the Timber Lodge Fire near Midpines. In the worst accident on the forest, Thomas W. Foley, Martin F. Giorgi, Raymond St. Pierre and John Vaun Rasch died and two other crewmen were critically burned.[13] However tragic, the accident did not slow the Sierra's quest for improved fire suppression. In 1962, the Sierra inaugurated the first helitack crew, signaling one more pioneer move.

Wildfires were not the only blazes Puhn's Sierra staff had to put out. His supervisorial years were marked by several hot controversies as well. In one such incident, Puhn indirectly paved the way for the creation of a national recreational trail along Lewis Creek after his staff convinced a federal court that land promoter Sam Mobley of Coarsegold was pulling some shenanigans in the area above Oakhurst. Starting in the early 1940s, Mobley had filed a mining claim on the area. Then he began operating a small resort and bathhouse near Corlieu Falls, catering to motorists headed up state Highway 41 to Yosemite. Over time Mobley's resort business grew; his roadside business became something of a landmark - or an eyesore. At some point he apparently figured he could do even better.

For years Mobley had argued that the western boundary of the forest should be in the public domain and open to homesteading under the 1906 law. When the postwar uranium craze hit, Mobley concluded that there was uranium on the site and turned to the 1872 Mining Act to gain control of the scenic canyon with its spectacular waterfall. Even after the courts had ruled against him Mobley persisted. In the late 1950s he sold cabin sites as mining claims to some well-connected customers, in-

cluding one Fresno County Supervisor, who insisted on a clear title. At that juncture the Madera County District Attorney stepped in, filed fraud charges and took Mobley to court where he was convicted.[14] Then he tried to get a special use permit from the Forest Service to maintain his other business. The Forest Service refused but Mobley remained in business.

Larry Whitfield, who had just been named the Bass Lake district ranger, said that Mobley's action was nothing more than another land grab. Under Puhn's direction he began digging into the case; the more Whitfield looked into the matter, the more upset he got. He then turned to the U.S. Attorney and began pressing the government's case. To better acquaint himself with the law Whitfield became a law student, studying at night to pass the bar. When Mobley sold a portion of his the old mining claim in 1961, the Forest Service asked that he be cited for criminal contempt for violating the permanent injunction. Finally in 1965, Mobley lost his last battle to retain the land, when a federal court ruled against him. After years of litigation, the court put Mobley on probation and ordered him to stay out of the mining business. For Puhn it was "the most aggravating and frustrating mining claim to ever plague forest officers anywhere."[15] Both Whitfield and Puhn were on hand the day government bulldozers began destroying the buildings Mobley had refused to remove.

One the most important and least controversial events of Puhn's years came in 1965 when Tehipite Valley was transferred to Kings Canyon National Park. Unlike Benedict's desperate attempt to hold on to adjacent sections of Kings Canyon in the late 1930s, Puhn went along with the transfer of

Huntington Lake has become a mainstay of sailors from around the state, hosting a series of sailing regattas every summer.

Tehipite Valley. "I didn't oppose it; I felt it was an area that should be preserved." Nevertheless, the deletion subtracted thousands of acres from the Sierra National Forest. Once again, the new boundary forced the service to produce a new map of the Sierra. Over the years, Puhn quipped years later, the Forest Service has been the best customers of the mapmaker and printer. "Every five or six years there is some change that forces the Forest Service to produce a new map, he said."[16]

During his 12 year supervisorial stay, Puhn faced many other challenges resulting from California's dynamic growth. For instance, the Sierra Forest also pioneered what was known as the conversion projects through prescribed burns. Overmature stands of brush in Sugarloaf-Jose Basin and Fence Meadow-Big Creek were crushed and burned to improve the feed for wildlife. Such efforts involved the California Department of Fish and Game and the Fresno County Sportsmen's Association. The long-range goal was to reverse what some wildlife biologists had seen as a marked decline in the deer populations on the forest.

Puhn credits many of his achievements to the support of Rep. B.F. "Bernie" Sisk, who for many years was a strong supporter of the service. "When push came to shove Sisk was there when we needed help. . . particularly when he drafted legislation and held hearings on attempts to make alternate land claims under the old Forest Homestead Act. He also provided help in reimbursing the rural counties for the costs of search and rescues and other emergencies on federal lands; and clarifying the law so we could establish cooperating associations, such as the Three Forest Interpretative Association."[17]

But he also saw several pieces of legislation that went against the grain of the Forest Service's long standing tenants of service and dedication. The first was the federal wage and hour measure of 1964 that mandated comparable pay and required the federal government to pay overtime. While Puhn felt the salary adjustments were proper, aspects of the bill went too far when it came to overtime. "It had the effect of mandating mediocrity and inequality, by requiring equal pay and overtime. As a result many of those who would have contributed more were prohibited from doing so."

Puhn retired from the Sierra National Forest on January 6, 1969, when he was replaced by his deputy, Zane G. Smith Jr.. He viewed his tenure as one that bridge the period between commodity production and environmental protection. The veteran supervisor also had mixed feelings over the changes in his beloved Forest Service. "Early on the Forest Service had public respect in gobs. But then we began losing it to public involvement - that was little more than special interest, or the single-use interest groups. There were the lumber men, the cattlemen, summer home owners, resort permittees and others, and they all started going to the seat of power rather than to the Forest Service and that bothered me a great deal," Puhn lamented.

Through his career the veteran forester had seen many changes. The Sierra reflected much of that change. For example, when he replaced Thomas in 1957, the Sierra had 75 permanent employees, when Puhn left it had 135 similarly classified employees. The timber harvest had also zoomed from 81 million board feet to 152 million.[18]

"When I began my career in the 1930s, very few people were concerned with what was happening on the national forest. But when I left the service the pressure and the competition for forest land and resources was just beginning to peak. Those early years, those innocent years were the 'Golden Age of Forestry,' where we could manage the forest for the greater good of the nation, rather than getting into the needs of the special interest groups." In particular, he felt the emphasis on public involvement was little more than special influence on the direction of forest management - at the expense of the greater American public. "Multiple use sounds good, but in a squeezing world with finite resources it doesn't work. Coordinated use should be used.

"The big problem, I believe, was the environmental laws and subsequent court decisions that mandated 'public involvement.' Unfortunately, this public involvement was little more than special interest involvement. Along with that there came a slow but steady transfer of authority and autonomy to the regional and Washington offices of the Forest Service," he recalled.

Chapter Nine

Forestry by Planning and Politics

While Zane Smith Jr.'s tenure as Forest Supervisor was the shortest of any Sierra Supervisor, his watch touched the forest in ways that are only now being realized.

A Forest Service "brat" by birth, Smith moved rapidly through the ranks after graduating from the University of Montana in 1955. After serving briefly on the Rogue River National Forest in Oregon, Smith flew off for three years as a U.S. Air Force pilot. Three years later he landed on the Rogue River again, serving in the fire and timber management offices. From there he moved on to the Malheur, Winema and Okanogan national forests. Then in 1965, as the Forest Service assumed responsibility for much of the Job Corps program, Smith turned up as director of the center on the Pinchot National Forest. That job led to the Washington office of the Job Corps, and then onto the staff of Vice-President Hubert Humphrey's Council on Youth Opportunity.

In June 1968, Smith arrived in Fresno having been appointed as deputy to veteran supervisor Walter Puhn. Smith recalled that he was tremendously excited about the assignment ". . . this particular forest was on the leading edge of the effect that urbanization and social change was having on the land. In addition, the Sierra, in contrast to some of the more southerly California National Forests, possesses the really spectacular and productive natural resources which produce in great quantities many of the things that society desires. Suddenly, wild and forested land had become a scarcity item in terms of the full desires of people, both for the commodity and amenity values," he observed.[1]

Smith also brought along a management philosophy that was ahead of its time. In a 1969 speech to a conference of landscape architects in Fresno, he sounded a warning. "It has suddenly dawned on us that wood, water, forage and natural environment have become commodities of basically fixed quantities. In the struggle between economic and social interests, we see more and more of our decisions being made in the political arena. The really tough decisions have not been left to the sideboards embracing multiple-use management. The public does not consider multiple-use management creditable enough to depend on."[2]

He also foresaw the transition toward ecologically sustainable forestry use long before it became a buzzword. As Smith saw it, there were only two choices for the Forest Service: preservation or prudent resource management - and another agency already had the task of preservation. Essentially, Smith felt the service needed to pursue the kind of effective resource management that would give the service credibility.

By the time he had been elevated to the Supervisor's job the environmental movement had become a major force on the American landscape. On April 22, 1970, Smith and the Sierra went through the first Earth Day together. "It had been smoldering for some time and we were prepared to actively participate and follow through. I feel that we were in positive partnership with most of the conservation/environmental groups of the time. In many ways the Sierra crossed the line into a new conservation early, due to the diverse and relatively well educated public we dealt with," he observed years later.[3]

Although Smith's stay on the Sierra was only two years, he brought an inordinate amount

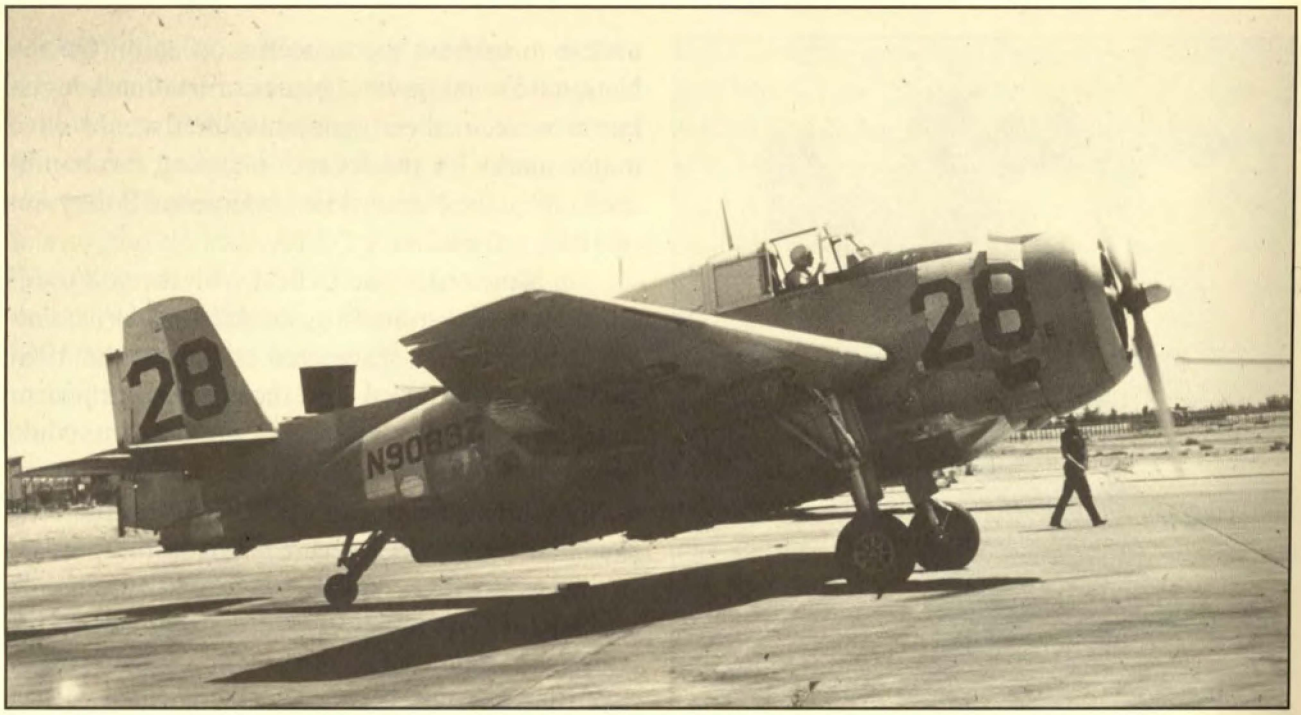
Forest volunteer John Hawksworth inspects an ancient sequoia in Nelder Grove Historic Area. The trunk contains some of the oldest known organic material, dating back 10,000 years.

of vision to an agency about to be buffeted by the winds of change. In his short tenure, he tackled many of the increasingly complex and controversial problems of forest management. He was then transferred to the Williamette National Forest for a brief tour before becoming Regional Forester of California.

Smith was followed by Sotero Muniz, who took another unusual approach to get to the Supervisor's post of the Sierra - one that was tied in with the power generation on the forest. As early as 1968, when Puhn began thinking about retirement, he saw the need for a deputy supervisor who could deal with the complex issues of hydroelectricity and water rights. On several occasions Puhn had discussed the matter with Smith. As the 50-year permits for the early hydroelectric projects began to expire, the two wanted to make sure the forest was prepared to address the re-licensing of those projects in a way that would benefit both the utilities and the public. Some observers of the utility scene felt the government "had given away the store" back in the early 1900s when it granted the first 50-year permits with little compensation.

When Smith and Puhn got together to discuss a deputy for the Sierra, they scanned a long list of qualified applicants. Then they came upon Sotero Muniz, a 42-year old forest engineer out of Utah. The two felt Muniz had the qualifications they were looking for. "Here is someone who is not only an engineer and well versed in water issues but is Hispanic," Puhn observed. "He has all the right qualifications."[4]

Muniz had joined the service in Utah in 1959 as a civil engineer. After assignments on four other national forests, he arrived in Fresno in 1969 as Smith's deputy. But within a year, he had been catapulted into the Supervisor's post as the Sierra's ninth leader. Nor could he have anticipated the events that would unfold before him. While it was no easy effort, the re-licensing of the hydro projects went comparatively well, although not without major hurdles. Besides higher fees, the new con-



Aerial suppression got a big lift in the 1980s after the likes of the TBM-Avenger, above, and other older aircraft gave way to larger, more powerful air tankers, such as the DC-4. below.

The sequoias of Nelder Grove, including the popular Granddad Tree, continue to draw admirers to the Sierra National Forest.

tracts included a long list of recreational improvements that the power companies would be required to make. Muniz soon found a forest of highly charged issues staring him in the face. For starters, he had moved into the Supervisor's post during one of most dramatic periods in the nation's history - one that involved not only the Forest Service but the nation as a whole. The country had been shell-shocked by the Vietnam war. The environmental and civil rights movements were developing at a fast pace. The nation, particularly California, was experiencing massive growth. While man had walked on the moon - mankind had been unable to address the concerns on earth. On the National Forest, several pieces of landmark legislation were in their genesis, which would have major marks on the forest, including the bombshell called the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, referred to as NEPA.

Muniz also had to deal with the still unresolved issues surrounding potential wilderness areas that were not designated as part of the 1964 act. The åct required that those undeveloped or roadless areas that meet certain requirements could be proposed for inclusion under subsequent reviews. In California, the identification of these potential areas had bogged down in the process known as Roadless Area Review and Examination or RARE I. The review got further hung up in the courts when the Washington office tried to expedite the review by applying ill-defined NEPA guidelines to the review process.

The roadless review on the Sierra was no little problem. The Rare I study area included 120,000 acres or nearly 10 percent of the forest. That acreage along with the 325,000 acres of land already in wilderness soon underscored the growing battle over national forest resources. For instance, administrative appeals that were unknown a decade earlier were becoming commonplace. Zane Smith remembered that during Walter Puhn's 12 year tenure there had not been one such appeal. Yet in his brief year-long Supervisorial stay, Smith had accumulated a half dozen.[5]

The Sierra was experiencing many of the resource and commodity issues that were facing the larger National Forest System. In the East, a contested timber sale that led to Monogahela decision in 1974 underscored the fact that the courts and congress were making Forest Service policy.

On the Sierra, one such dispute, over Kaiser Ridge, had led to what some Sierra employees called a case of "instant wilderness." At that time, the Sierra forest claimed another questionable first when the Kaiser Wilderness Area was established without the traditional administrative or legislative hearings. The wilderness debate and designation developed after cabin owners around Huntington Lake learned of the proposed Home Camp timber sale. Fearing it would detract from the natural

setting along the north shore of the manmade lake they raised objections. An administrative appeal followed, which halted any further action toward the timber sale. At that point, a Fresno school teacher, Charles Hull, who had developed a following through the years by presenting interpretive programs at the Lakeshore Resort, got involved. Using slide shows and campfire talks, he maintained that the timber sale would destroy the natural ambiance of Huntington Lake that visitors had come to know and enjoy. As part of his campaign, Hull scouted out other areas of the forest where efforts to replant red fir trees had not been successful and presented those scenes as the Home Camp scenario. Other cabin owners and conservationists became involved, and the Sierra found itself in another controversy.

Up to that time the timber industry had not been overly concerned about the wilderness movement. For the most part, they saw it as something directed toward the remote high country - or the non-timbered areas of the forests - the "wilderness on the rocks." Furthermore, they were too busy cutting record amounts of timber to be concerned. But the Kaiser "instant wilderness" changed all that. When the loggers realized what had happened they began to react. They felt the Kaiser Peak area contained enough timber to provide an annual harvest of about 4 million board feet. Another dispute arose over logging in a roadless area on the Rancheria unit of the Kings River district. As the debate over other roadless areas and wilderness unfolded, the timber industry and other affected forest users became more involved, mounting the battle cry of "no more wilderness."

As the controversy heightened, Muniz rejected some of the internal doubts and concerns from his own staff that the proposed sale would be too heavy and would impact the scenic qualities as well as the watershed. He refused to modify the proposed timber sale and pressed forward. At that point the Sierra Club became involved, as did the Huntington Lake Association, with the Save Kaiser Ridge Committee capturing the high ground.[6] Against that setting, Rep. John Krebs, picked up on the debate. Not long thereafter he introduced

White water rafting became popular on the Kings River in the early 1970s; since then similar action has taken place on the Merced River, also.

Regional Forester Doug Leisz and Sotero Muniz discuss a wilderness management during a 1977 tour of the John Muir Wilderness.

legislation that established a 15,000 acre wilderness around the flanks of Kaiser Peak, sealing the fate of the Home Creek timber sale. With comparatively little debate the bill was approved by both the House and Senate.

For the Sierra the growing debate over wilderness signalled a marked shift in forest management - validating Puhn's and Smith's prophecy of political or judicial management of the forest. The controversy took on other dimensions. On the national scene, RARE 1 gave way to RARE II as the very semantics or definition of wilderness became an issue. On the Sierra the new roadless review expanded to include six areas of approximately 175,000 acres. In some respects the debate was defining Forest Service management - or as one critic said - the lack of it. The Sierra areas involved proposed additions to the established Minarets, John Muir and Monarch wilderness areas. While all the additions were contested, the one area that seemed to have generated an inordinate amount of interest was the Pincushion area, a rugged mountainside located northwest of Lake Thomas A. Edison. For the loggers and off-road vehicle enthusiasts, this was their final defense line. They felt they had given enough. On the other side, the environmental groups saw a wilderness designation for the area as a permanent answer - or clo-

Snow play enjoyed continued popularity in the 1970s as winter recreation on the Sierra National Forest surged, above. A pair of cross-country skiers makes their way along the shore of Huntington Lake. Nordic skiing also made a giant step forward.

Water skiing was just one of the recreational activities that enjoys widespread acceptance on some reservoirs on the forest.

sure - to any trans-Sierra road, such as the proposed Forest Highway 100, the Mammoth Pass Road. Additionally, they saw it as a way of providing protection to an uninterrupted wilderness extending all the way from Yosemite to Sequoia National Park.[7]

As the 1970s unfolded on the Sierra and as RARE II droned on, Congress passed a host of measures dealing with the environment and natural resources - many of which would affect the 187-million acres of national forests and rangelands. Along with NEPA, it approved the Endangered Species Act, setting the stage for years of conflict with unknown and unforeseen consequences. At the behest of the Forest Service, Congress had also passed the Resources Planning Act in 1974 and the National Forest Management Act in 1976.[8] Earlier efforts toward ensuring clean air and water and even civil rights would also reach down and affect forest management. Other developments would bring still more change. For example, computers were coming onto the forest - adding more information and, at times, more confusion to the forest scene.

One aspect of the RPA required each forest to establish a long-range management plan. The need for such a plan was restated in NFMA, specifying a land and resources plan. At the onset neither measure produced much response within the Sierra staff. Most saw it as just another government mandate, another plan. Little could they or anyone else foresee what the future held.

When Muniz first arrived on the Sierra, he was amazed to discover that unlike the forests in Region Four, the Sierra and the other National Forests in California had not developed multiple-use sustain yield plans. All too often they were using only functional or specific plans for forest administration, he noted. At that juncture, Muniz directed his staff to develop a multiple-use plan in conformity with the 1960 act, which was aimed at maintaining the long-range productivity of the forest. As the work proceeded in 1972, it was discovered that some technical studies dealing with soils

and streams were not complete. In addition, other staff members also wanted "slope maps" to cover management activities regarding fire, engineering, timber and forage.[9]

About the same time, Muniz recognized the need to update the Sierra's timber management plan. He then turned to Bob Flynn, a 35-year Sierra veteran and fire management officer, to produce a new timber plan. Not long afterwards, John Kruse, a recreation planner from the Lassen National Forest, arrived on the Sierra to begin planning the recreation improvements outlined in the relicensing of the hydro projects. Muniz, wanting to capture Flynn's expertise and Kruse's planning know-how, assigned the two men to the timber plan.

But a strange thing happened along the way. When the NFMA came along in 1976, mandating a comprehensive forest plan, Muniz thought the Sierra was in a unique and favorable position to do that kind of comprehensive planning. When he discussed the situation with Regional Forester Doug Leisz, it was soon decided that the Sierra should lead the newly mandated land planning effort in the California region. Once again, it was envisioned that the Sierra National Forest would be breaking new ground -and leading the planning effort.

When work finally got underway on the Sierra Land and Resource Management Plan {LMP} it was projected that a plan could be completed in about 18 months or by 1978. But as the guidelines for the planning effort unfolded, the enormity of the task soon became apparent. Such a plan would outline the uses and production from the forest, serving as a 10 or 15 year guide -one that would be upgraded periodically. Forest users and visitors began lining up behind their particular passion, whether it was backpacking, sailing or logging. The "public involvement" that Puhn had prophesied years earlier would become special interests soon emerged. The Sierra was "resource rich" and had too many options, Muniz observed. "The difficult thing has been getting the people to understand our mission so they could interact with us. We have tried to get the different groups meaningfully involved to recognize the tradeoffs. It's been difficult to deal with these po-

The Arab oil embargo of 1973 caused a new round of firewood cutting on the Sierra, bringing out both commercial and individual cutters.

Smoke

Seeing the Forest Fire For the Smoke

After stumbling on to the Rock Creek fire of August 1981, former Supervisor Walter Puhn, discovered how things had changed on "his old" Sierra National Forest.

When Puhn and his two companions were ordered out of the burn area he thought he had suffered an indignity and given no respect - on what was his old Kings River ranger district. "It was done when I was trying to explain the finer points of fire suppression to my companions, Jack Dozier, retired forester and logger of North Fork, and Clair Nelsen, retired Fresno State University professor and former CCC firefighter on the Stanislaus," Puhn recounted. His group soon found that the order to remove themselves was "quite appropriate" since they were not wearing hard hats, a device which was not in use when Puhn was on the district; and that the order had come from the "fire safety officer," a position that also had not been devised at that time.

"Furthermore, I was quite ignorant of the terminology of the fire organization and hence to what was going on. For instance, there was no fire boss but an 'incident commander.' Apparently this man - or woman - not only bosses fires but any other 'incident' that comes along. I also found there were no such things as 'division bosses, sector bosses, camp bosses' and the like; but there was a 'situation status chief,' a 'suppression and rescue chief,' a 'ground suppression director' and so on. I guessed the resources status unit would be a delegation from the 'SO, RO and WO,' out to look after the timber, wildlife and other forest values, but I learned instead it was there to do those things that used to be done by a plans chief. "

The 'ground chief unit' was there to do the camp boss job. While I may have some idea as to the jobs of the 'documentation unit,' I am at a loss as to what the 'base unit' does. Being schooled only in the Byron Beattie 'Principle of Fire Suppression,' I have become thoroughly convinced that I had no business on the fire with or without a hard hat, and went home to rest and remember some of the past fires I would have liked to have been kicked off. No doubt this was to the relief of the safety officer - who had been told by my friends that I used to be a big shot on the Sierra."

(Puhn's requested departure was not a singular experience. The author of this book, then a working newsman, was prevented from entering the Rock Creek Fire area - despite his possession of a suit of Nomex, a hardhat and the mandatory red card.

"Insufficient footwear . . . and you would be in the way," explained the fire guard.)

Despite its relatively high costs, helicopter logging made repeated appearances on the Sierra during the 1970s

larized views," Muniz told The Fresno Bee.[10]

As he looked at the bigger picture, Muniz also felt it would be prudent to look at the Forest Service's performance - or its "return on investment." For that he began developing a more thorough examination of forest management. Unlike the traditional approach that had relied on forest districts or watersheds, he espoused a process known as "investment-shed," recognizing those areas where the service had made major investments. [11]

Other clouds were gathering over the Sierra Forest. Back in the early 1950s, the service had instituted the allowable cut system on each forest. These controls were designed to insure that no forest would cut more timber than it could grow. The figure had been set at conservative levels, figuring that any error should be on the side of conservation. At that time the Sierra was harvesting about 80 million board feet annually. It was a sustainable figure, according to Walt Kirchner, the Sierra timber management officer of that period. In the following decade, however, the harvest had grown to about 160 million board feet annually. In the 1970s, timber management officer John Underwood told The Fresno Bee that the figure was still sustainable. By that time, however, thousands of acres of forestland had been declared off limits to the loggers because of the pending wilderness reviews. Despite the reduction in the timber base, the timber harvest remained at the previous high levels. To meet those targets, that is, the needed volume of sawlogs, the loggers were re-entering those previously cut-over lands faster then prudent forestry dictated[12].

Muniz found himself in the middle of several other disputes, including one lingering controversy with Fresno County over administrative responsibilities and planning - otherwise known as "turf." In the early 1970s, as Pacific Gas and Electric Company announced plans for its massive Helms Creek Pump Storage project, Bill and Kathryn Jasper, who operated the mountain resort at Wishon Reservoir, saw the need to expand their resort to accommodate the hundreds of workers the project would employ. As permittees, they applied and obtained the necessary permits from the Forest Service. As construction proceeded, however, Jasper was notified that he would have to obtain a building permit from Fresno County. Muniz refused; he told the county that he could recognize the county's jurisdiction over private lands within the forest boundary, but the Forest Service land was not the county's domain. The argument went on for years with threats of court action heard periodically. Gradually a tenuous truce was arranged but the matter remains unresolved today.

The Muniz years were accompanied by still other changes. Some of his staff accused him of being "indecisive" and reluctant to make a decision. Muniz's defenders refuted such allegations. They pointed to a long line of accomplishments during his Supervisorial years. If there was any basis for such charges they could be found in the avalanche of over 40 laws that Congress had passed since the 1960s dealing with national forests. Muniz said the long, drawn out planning debacle could have been addressed by a better understand-

Members of the Young Adult Conservation Corps left their productive marks on the Bass Lake District during the late 1970s.

The campgrounds at Lake Thomas A. Edison saw widespread acceptance during the 1970s, reflecting the continued growth of recreation on the Sierra.

Sierra Sidekick

Forest Partner - Fred Ross

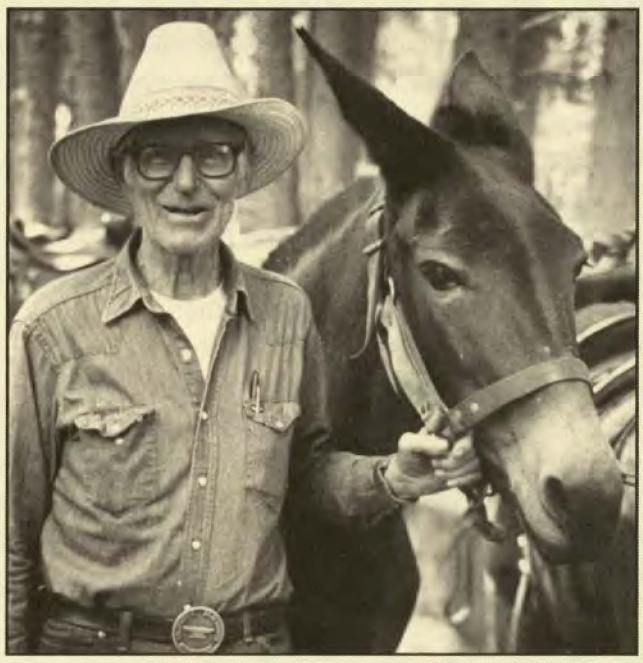
Fred Ross never wore a Forest Service uniform but for more than 60 years he has served as something of a partner with the Sierra National Forest.

As one of the veteran "permittees," Ross operates the Lost Valley Ranch, one of many privately owned businesses that provide goods or services to the public under a special use permit. Specifically, he rents burros and makes what backpackers call "food drops." It's a job - and a way of life - that he and his family have come to know and love. Yet his is only one of approximately 650 recreation permittees - or similar partnerships - that benefit the visitor, the government and the permittee.

His Florence Lake neighbors, the Cunninghams and the Smiths are also permittees who span several generations. The Cunninghams, who run the pack station, span four generations and have over 100 years of service. The Smiths and their son-in-law are still counting. Collectively their service adds up to hundreds of years and contributes to the colorful heritage of the old High Sierra Ranger District.

Ross' trail reaches way back, touching many lives. He got his start in the 1930s, when he began taking Boy Scouts into the Sierra on summer outings. Through the years, he and his family have introduced hundreds to the pleasure of the Sierra. He admits that it is not always a profitable arrangement. Trying to make a profit from a 100-day season in today's business climate is no longer an easy task, he points out. Yet he loves what he does.

Ross has known both hot and cold times on the forest. From his perspective, the worst wildfire on the Sierra was the one he was forced to fight back in 1932 - although he can't recall it by name. At that time, he and three friends were herding mules back from a Yosemite trip when a fire broke out in the north fork drainage of the Kings River. When the district ranger intercepted the group, Ross and his friends became instant firefighters. "He conscripted us right on the spot - drafted .... That's all there was to it. I didn't get home until a week later," he recalled years later. Through the years, the Ross family has become something of an Sierra institution with a keen sense of forest history. Ross enjoys his association with the Forest Service yet he feels the personnel move or change jobs too frequently. As a result they don't acquire the sense of history as do those permittees with life-long ties to the Sierra Nevada. " I guess that's part of our role . . . to provide a little institutional memory," he said.



ing of and adherence to the Multiple Use-Sustained Yield Act of 1960. "If all the parties had been able to translate that simple language into a uniform policy, the nation could have been spared all of the staggering public cost associated with the planning effort, but they didn't," Muniz reflected years later.[13]

In the years following the Arab Oil Embargo of 1973, and the rapid escalation in energy prices, hundreds of American families resurrected or re-created the old wood stove. All of a sudden woodcutters descended on the forest en masse - both free use and those cutting under a special use permit. Cord after cord of firewood came off the forest. The fuels management program was so successful that cutting areas were established. Eventually free use gave way to a fee schedule. In some woodcutting areas, competition became so keen that the timber operators were forced to put guards on their logging decks.

Muniz left the Sierra in January of 1978 when he was appointed deputy chief in charge of the National Forest System at Washington, D.C. Over his eight year stay he had come to know the Sierra in good times as well as bad - through storm, drought and fire. On his departure he noted the Sierra had improved in transportation and watershed protection because road standards had been upgraded from dirt to pavement. At the same time, more than a dozen garbage dumps had been closed and replaced with a central collection or transfer approach, enabling the forest to eliminate one of its long-standing problems. In addition, he observed that the re-licensing of the hydroelectric projects - the original agenda that had brought him to the Sierra - had been addressed.

He was succeeded by Richard L. Stauber, who also faced the difficult task of moving the Sierra forward during a period of continued change. In many respects the 1970s represented a decade of shifting public values toward the forest. Some of those changes focused on the diversity of the agency's work force. At a time when minorities were grabbing hold of the career ladder, the women of the Forest Service continued to languish at the bottom rung. The staff on Sierra was no exception, with its women concentrated in the ranks of the clerks, typists and secretaries. That was about to change.

Starting with President John F. Kennedy's Commission on the Status of Women some of the problems had been recognized at the national level. No corrective actions was taken, however. In the years following the Civil Rights Act, Affirmative Action and the Federal Women's Program continued to recognize the situation. Not much was done until a woman employee, Gene Bernardi of the Forest Service, brought a class action lawsuit in June 1973. In that suit she charged that the Forest Service had engaged in sex discrimination in both hiring and promotional practices. After several years of appeals and legal maneuvering a tentative settlement, the 1981 Consent Decree, was concluded. This agreement established hiring and promotion goals that were to last five years. The decree has been extended two times and remains in effect to this date.

Other equally far reaching changes also were impacting the Forest Service - changes that underscored the lack of in-depth knowledge about Forest Service management and forest systems. As the implications of NEPA, the Endangered Species and a mass of other forest-related legislation began filtering down, the service stepped back and looked at some of the earlier measures that had cleared Congress. The retrospection went all the way back to the Antiquities Act of 1907, which, essentially, required federal agencies to preserve and protect their cultural heritage. A new problem - with old roots - was about to show its profile on the Sierra.

Chapter Ten

Ecosystem Management

In 1978, when Richard L. Stauber replaced Sotero Muniz as the tenth Supervisor, the Sierra National Forest made something of an abrupt U-turn in its ambitious road-building program of the 1960s and 1970s. No where was that philosophical change more apparent than on the Kaiser Pass Road and the Stump Springs Road in the Kaiser Peak area of the forest.

In the 1960s, Robert Thompson, the Pineridge District Ranger, had secured authorization to improve the torturous 1920 Kaiser Pass Road in back of Huntington Lake. When Muniz came along he supported those plans, as well as those that called for paving the Stump Springs Road, which looped around Kaiser Peak. Under the terms of the renegotiated utility licenses, Southern California Edison Company would replace the winding, single lane road over 9,200-foot Kaiser Pass, while the Forest Service would pave the Stump Springs Road.

For some forest users, particularly the timber industry, improvement of both roads was critical to the timber harvesting plans. An improved Kaiser Pass Road would open up the country around Mount Tom and Rattlesnake and expedite timber harvesting. Similarly, paving the Stump Springs Road would reduce the hauling costs for those working on the far side of Kaiser Ridge.

But Stauber had a different perspective. Along with his recreation officer Dale Hosler, the two saw an improved road as a threat to the natural ambiance of the back country around Kaiser Peak and Mono Hot Springs. They felt improved access would severely impact the Sierra back country and the area around Florence and Edison lakes. Stauber maintained that the existing Kaiser Pass Road tended to discourage sight-seeing, thereby filtering out some of the attendant traffic. Along the same way, paving the Stump Springs Road would encourage tourism, which could create a traffic problem with the logging trucks already using the road. Later on, the supervisor would harbor second thoughts about on-going improvements to the Beasore Meadows Road on the west side of the forest.[1]

Along with the debate over the California wilderness, a tug-of-war soon developed over Kaiser Pass. On one side, the timber industry began pushing the improvements; and work on the road was undertaken. However, the earlier designation of the Kaiser Wilderness Area had changed the equation. Having lost the source of timber from the lower tree covered slopes around Kaiser Ridge, the industry began looking toward Mount Tom and beyond - to the Pincushion Country. Private foresters, such as veterans Henry "Hank" Abraham and Robert Krohn felt it was imperative that loggers have access to the Pincushion timber. There were already too many areas closed to timber harvesting, they and a host of loggers complained. Abraham recognized that harvesting would require extensive road construction, as well as an expensive bridge across the south fork of the San Joaquin River below Tennessee Point.

On the other hand, the Audubon and Sierra Clubs, seeking all the wilderness they could get, opposed any improvement or extensions in the back country roads. More specifically, the Sierra club's spokesman Richard Kangas argued that the Pincushion area was too fragile and exposed for logging, and that regeneration would take hundreds of years. In addition, having already derailed the

In 1980 Susan Odell, shown here with her husband Curtis, was appointed Mariposa District Ranger, the first woman in California to hold such a post.

plans for a Mammoth Pass highway, the club saw a permanent solution by designating the entire corridor as wilderness. All they had to do was close the gap, the corridor between the Minarets and John Muir Wilderness areas.

Stauber had arrived on the forest during a period of change and controversy. He had inherited all the criticism of the long-delayed land management plan. He also had acquired the headaches that were beginning to emerge with the construction of Pacific Gas and Electric Company's gigantic Helm's Creek Pump Storage Project, which had gotten underway in 1979 near Wishon Reservoir. From the very onset, the Helm's project had been a major concern for the Forest Service. While the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission had issued the main license, the Sierra was still required to work out the details and handle all the permits. The effort was no small task. When completed, the project would double the output of power of the 18 other hydro plants already operating on the forest.[2] As the project moved forward over 1,000 construction workers began arriving on the scene. A small city grew at Pole Corral, serving as a construction camp. Many of the urban problems followed, including drugs, crime, game poaching, massive cost over-runs and a series of tragic project accidents that were to claim nearly a dozen lives.

At about the same time, two other large hydro projects were coming onto the forest. Southern California Edison Company had begun work on its Balsam Meadow project near Shaver Lake, while Pacific Gas and Electric Company was boring away on Kerckhoff Two in the lower San Joaquin River Canyon. Still other major projects were on the drawing board, including the Jackass-Chiquito, which the Upper San Joaquin Authority had envisioned for the west side of the San Joaquin River Canyon; Bear Butte, which the City of Vernon had proposed for Big Creek above Huntington Lake; and efforts by the Kings River Conservation District to build new water and power generating facilities on Dinkey Creek, within the Kings River District.

The new hydro projects were only part of the developments on the forest. In many respects Congress was generating more controversy by its inability to resolve the wilderness land allocation, which, of course, only added to the Sierra's difficulties with its long-stalled land management plan. In December of 1981, Stauber informed nearly 1,600 forest users that a draft version of the plan had been completed. "Developing the plan to this point has taken three years. Many of you gave us input during the issues and concerns meetings and preliminary alternative meetings we have held in the past two years. Your input is now requested to complete the public participation process," Stauber said.[3] A year later, December 1982, John Kruse, the Sierra's planner, reported that the plan was in Washington D.C., undergoing a final revision. He predicted that the revised plan would include more timber production, more protection for wildlife as well as a cumulative study on new hydro-electric plants. Then as an aside - perhaps recognizing his own foreboding - Kruse told The Fresno Bee that RARE II and the unresolved issue of wilderness areas could complicate the key land allocation. Little did he know what lay ahead.

Aside from the planning delays, Stauber also faced a flurry of new federal mandates regarding social and environmental practices. Early on in 1978, Ann Dellavalle became the Sierra's first archaeologist, ushering in a new era of scientific and cultural review. Her appointment was looked

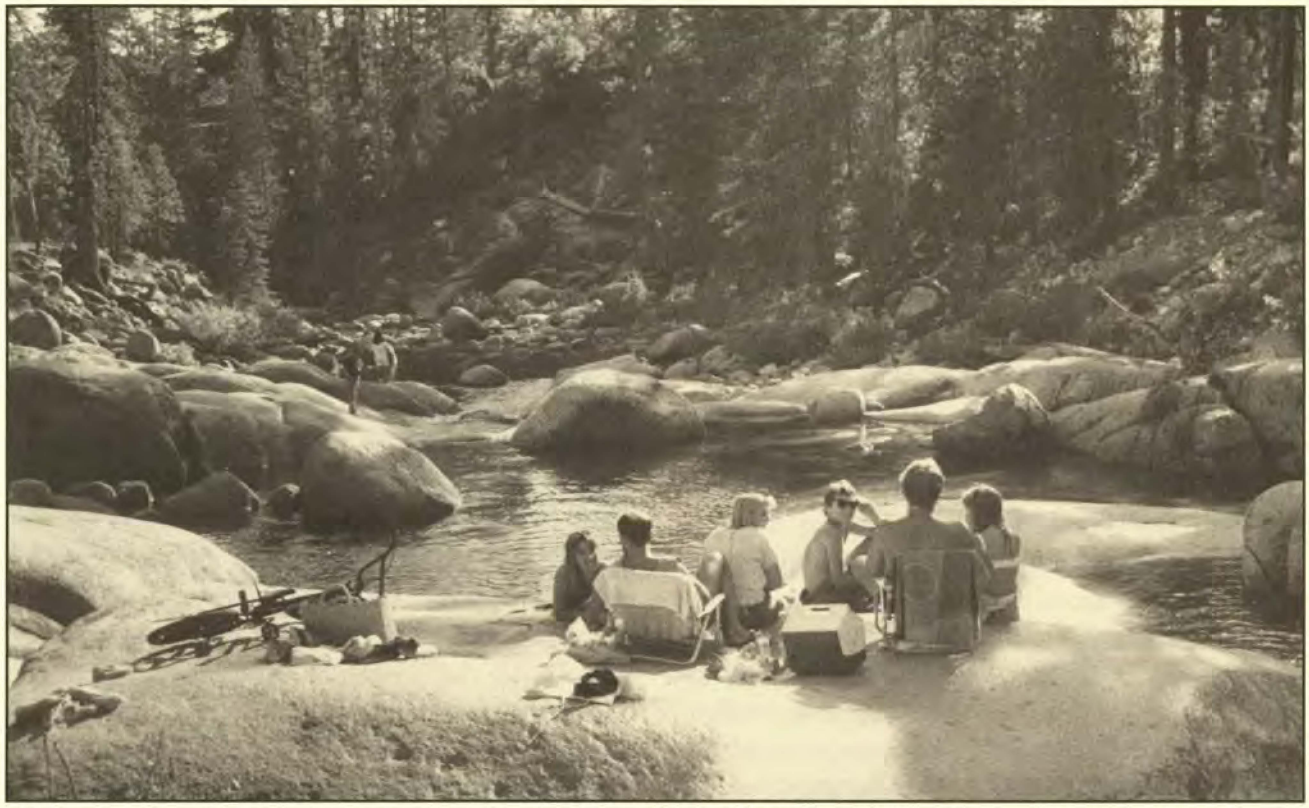
upon by many as a profound change in forest management. From that day on, all major projects on the forest would require archaeological clearance. In other words, before the Forest Service or one of its permittees could impact any significant archaeological site, a trained archaeologist would have to make an on site inspection of the area to determine what needed to be done to either avoid or mitigate any disturbance that would affect the area. Dellavalle also launched the first major reconnaissance of the forest; she, too, was turning old ground, looking for tell-tale signs of the native American Indians. In the course of that investigation, she uncovered literally hundreds of archaeological sites, adding to the history and the heritage of those first citizens and stewards of the forest.

In his effort to redress the long-simmering concerns of minorities and women, Stauber appointed Susan Odell as the Mariposa District Ranger in July 1980 - the first woman to occupy such a post in California. A native of Virginia, who had grown up around the forests of Oregon, Odell had the awesome task of breaking new ground[4].

After arriving at Mariposa, the first female district ranger acknowledged there were moments of "culture shock." She soon discovered that while some of the old problems had gone away, newer, more complex ones had emerged to take their place. Ever since the days of the reserve and Charles Shinn, the Mariposa area of the forest had posed problems for the service. So it was for Odell. Instead of grazing rights and rangeland, the prime area of contention had moved to the Merced River Canyon. Here, white water enthusiasts and anglers were vying for their share of the river with legitimate miners, squatters and other campers. Hydroelectric developers also wanted their power generating sites on both the main and south forks of the river. At the same time, beleaguered Yosemite National Park kept turning to the Forest Service, hoping it would address the mounting visitor loads in the park. In addition, the very configuration of the Mariposa District called for some joint cooperation with the Bureau of Land Management, the California Department of Forestry and the National Park Service. And then the Forest Service was caught up in its usual battle with the budget, posing some additional problems.

After some initial anxiety, Odell went to work, trying to get to know her staff as well as the movers and shakers within the Mariposa community. Moving into a post that had always been held

Forest archaeologist Ann Dellavalle, left, inspects a bedrock mortar hole on the Sierra with an assistant. As a result of her work the number of archaeological sites on the forest increased dramatically.



Dinkey Creek and Camp Fresno became the site of a major battle in the 1980s after environmentalists objected to plans by the Kings River Conservation District to build a dam in the area.

by a man posed no little problem, she recalled. "The biggest problem I had was dealing with misperceptions about a woman district ranger. Some thought I would bring a feminist's point of view or be a standard bearer for woman's issues. It took time to deal with those expectations."

There were gender-related problems. When she turned to the community she found additional barriers. Many of the service clubs - the traditional avenue where newcomers can meet the community - were still closed to women. Undaunted, Odell turned to some of the non-segregated organizations, such as the sportsmen's club or the arts council. Over time she managed to establish working relationships with those groups. Eventually Odell was able to convince the local people she was a professional forester rather than a professional feminist. It was not always easy, she recalled. While Odell's appointment signaled a dramatic change for the Sierra, Stauber was not home free. Many of the younger women on the Sierra staff considered Odell's appointment only tokenism, and pointed to a 1980 group photo of Stauber's executive staff: all male, all white. It was obvious to many that the Forest Service had discriminated against women in past hiring and promotions. Over the years the service had become a bastion of male domination. The Sierra was no exception.

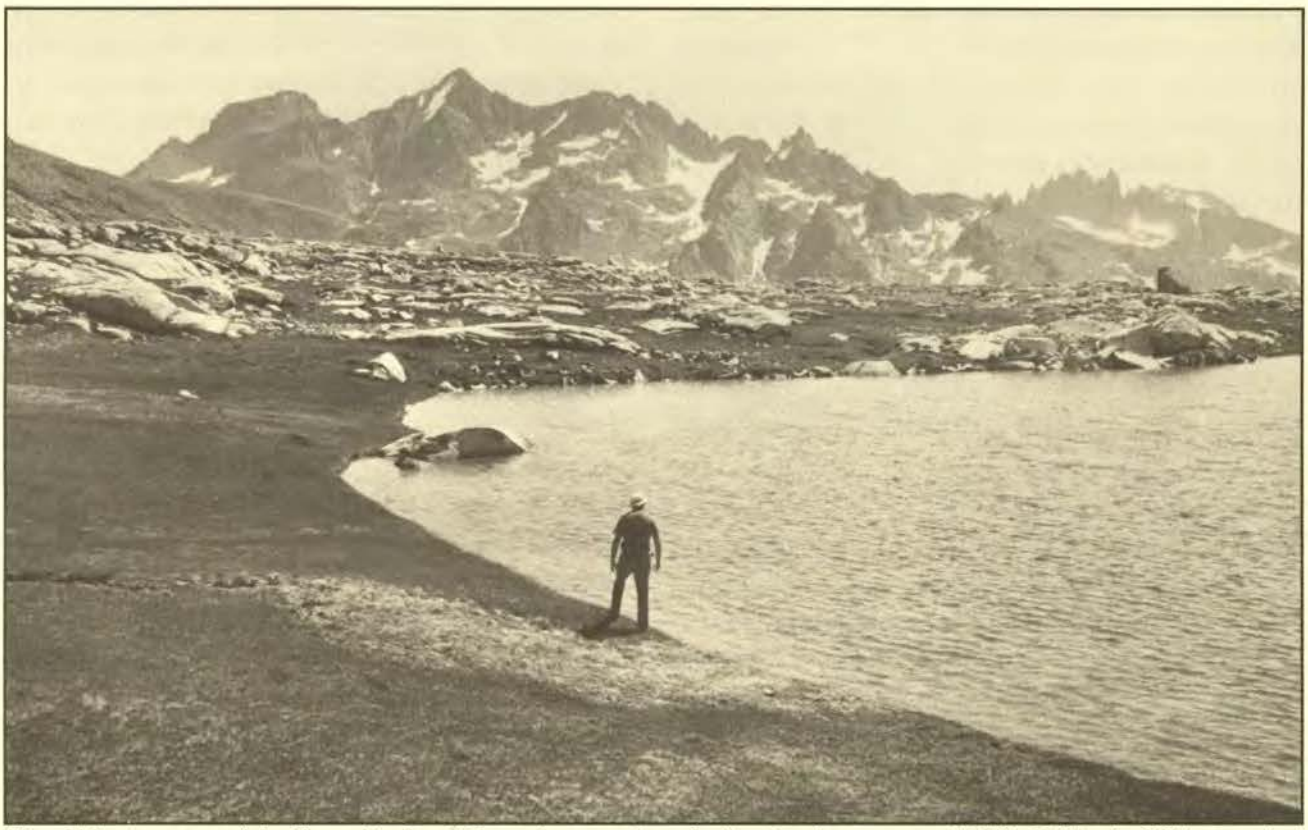
At that period of time, the debate was: was it right to advance a woman into a high-level position just because she was a woman, and should she be given preference because of her gender. While the nuances of the argument are still being discussed, the consent decree said she should be considered. The decision also came as a blow to the men, who, having followed the accepted career guidelines for many years, discovered that past hiring practices were no longer applicable.

The success or failure of the consent decree is a matter of perspective. The court actions were lengthy and wrenching, pulling at the very fabric of the Forest Service. At times, some wondered if the service could survive such extensive changes, molded over 80 years of tradition. In a protracted rebirth, the Forest Service took a long introspective look at itself and began making changes to meet the new world. Through close examination of hiring and promotional practices,

a long list of barriers were identified and mitigated under the guidelines of the consent decree. Job openings were "degenderized;" knowledge, skills and abilities were included in the job selection process. Employment and advancement opportunities were enhanced with career counselling, training, orientation and other aids. Procedures were also adopted to aid those women who did not want field careers but wanted to have other options to improve their careers. In many respects the consent decree only underscored the fact that forest service management was changing - changing dramatically - and the Sierra National Forest was part of that change. For instance, in 1993, the Sierra Forest Management Team included four women and one minority - a marked difference from the 1980 team.

While some worried that the consent decree had detracted from the service's job of resource management, the emergence of today's ecosystem management suggests otherwise. The Sierra had taken a struggling step back in 1980, when it hired the first permanent, full-time botanist in Kathy Kottcamp. Under the provisions of the Endangered Species Act, she began developing a "Sensitive Plant Program," recognizing those rare or threatened plants that required special management consideration - a list that eventually grew to include 20 different species of flora and fauna. The uniqueness of one indigenous plant, the carpenteria, had been recognized several years earlier when the Carpenteria Botanical Area had been established along the western boundary of the forest.

In some ways the 1980s was the era of the "ologist" on the forest. Although the Sierra had a hydrologist on the staff since the 1950s, the arrival of an archaeologist marked the first of a long line of scientists and specialists who would push the still-evolving resource management experiment one step further. Forest management made another evolution step in August 1981, when the Sierra hired Jerry DeGraff as the first geologist. Recognizing the importance of geology to prudent land management and forest planning, his appointment underscored the need for a full range of resource experts.[5] Up to that time, the forest had relied on the expertise of the engineering center at Arcadia, when considering major projects such as well sitings, bridge foundations and roads.



The wilderness area of the Sierra National Forest increased markedly after the passage of 1984 California Wilderness Act.

The California Wilderness Act set aside 30,000 acres as the Dinkey Creek Wilderness.

Down the years the Sierra has undertaken other similar steps toward protection of the forest, reaching all the way back to the 1920s, when the Huntington Lake Game Refuge and Recreation Area were established. In the 1970s, the Nelder Grove Historic area emerged from the shadows of the past when its historical importance was recognized. Some of the other special management areas include the Teakettle Experimental Area, the nearby Kings River Geological Area and the Courtright Intrusion Zone Geologic Area.

In June 1982, the Sierra needed all the experts and specialists it could find when the giant penstock of the Helms project ruptured during the testing phase, sending a tidal wave of water into Wishon Reservoir. The surge of high pressured water pushed around bulldozers and pickup trucks and swept tons of soil and vegetation into the reservoir. "It boggled my mind when I saw what had happened," recalled Steve Beck, the district resource officer. "It was hard to believe that water could have such force." In the wake of the disaster Jerry DeGraff began formulating a recovery and restoration program. While the top soil could not be recovered, Pacific Gas and Electric Company spent nearly $1 million in replanting the Lost Canyon area. In addition the utility signed a long-range agreement with the Sierra and the California Department of Fish and Game to continue the restoration work for the next 48 years.[6]

Finally in 1984 - and after years of haggling and drawing lines on the map - Congress passed the California Wilderness Act. Throughout the state, over 1.8 million acres of national forest became wilderness. On the Sierra, the legislation hit especially hard, designating an additional 227,000 acres - more than was included in RARE II - as wilderness. At the center of the statewide debate stood two pivotal areas - both on the Sierra National Forest - the remote Pincushion and the upper Kings River above Rodgers Crossing. While Representative Chip Pashayan managed to exclude the upper Kings River from wilderness, his Congressional colleague, Representative Rick Lehman, whose district had just been redrawn a few months earlier to embrace the Pincushion area - managed to include the area and close "The Gap." Under this sweeping measure, the Minaret Wilderness be-

Greg Marks' Extra Mile

A Measure of Service

For five summers Greg Marks patrolled the John Muir Wilderness, working as a wilderness ranger for the Sierra National Forest.

But July 31, 1983 accident changed all that. Marks was assigned to participate in a helicopter search for three Boy Scouts who had been reported missing in the John Muir Wilderness. It was an assignment that cost him dearly.

About a half hour into the flight the Lemoore Naval Air Station helicopter lost power and crashed into a remote hillside near Grassy Lake. Four people were injured; Marks, as the most seriously injured, was left paralyzed from the waist down.

The 25-year old Marks had been picked for the search flight because he knew that section of the High Sierra as well as anyone, having spent the three previous summers as a wilderness ranger, a seasonal employee. The missing scouts were eventually found by others.

A year after his accident, Marks was back on the forest - in a wheel chair - handing out wilderness permits at the High Sierra Ranger Station. Through his efforts and those of forest volunteer Don Dobson, the ranger station became accessible to those in wheel chairs. In the ensuing years, as he continued his studies at Humboldt State University, Marks managed to return to the Sierra each summer, where he served in a variety of jobs.

In some ways, Marks is a measure of the dedication and service Forest Service employees have extended over the years. On the Sierra National Forest alone, a half dozen people have given their lives in service to the forest. Many others have been injured.

In 1992, Marks became the access coordinator for the Sierra, coordinating the construction of a fishing platform for the disabled on the San Joaquin River at Jackass Meadows. As with many other dedicated Forest Service employees, he's still striving to increase forest opportunities for the physically challenged.

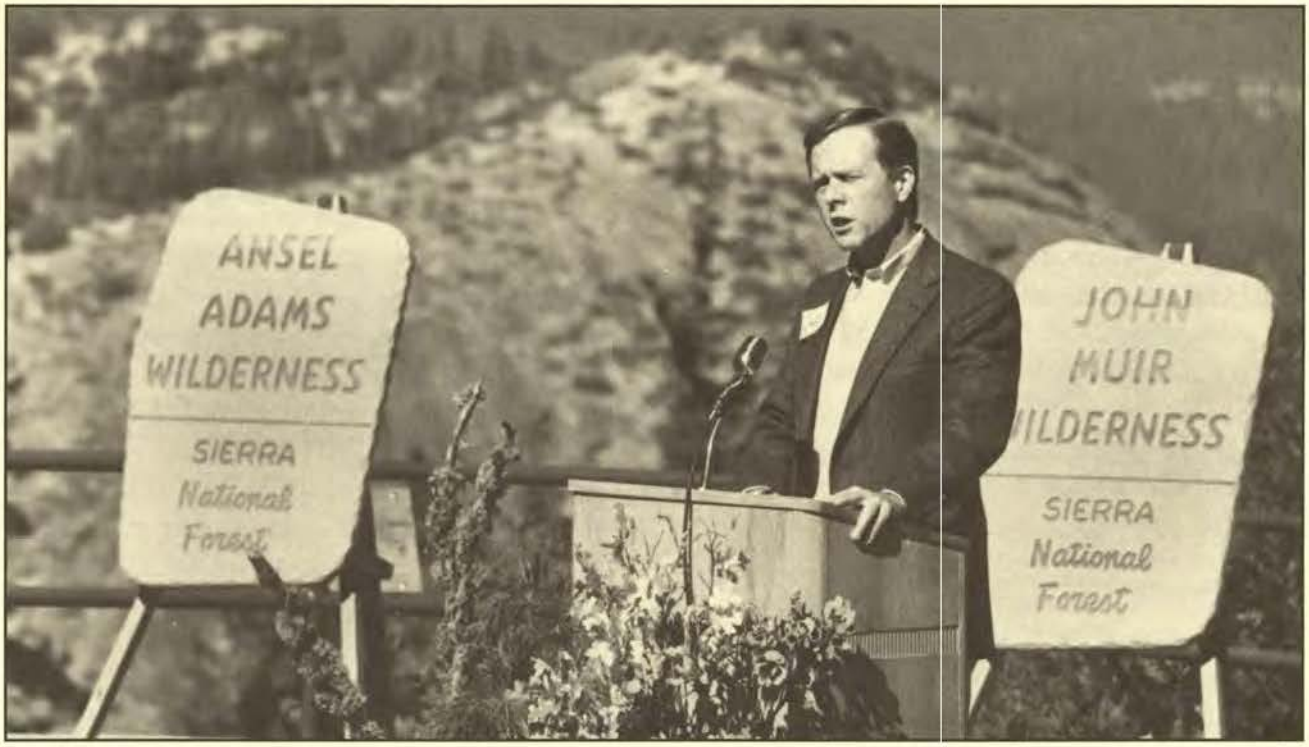
came the enlarged Ansel Adams Wilderness. In the process the 30,000-acre Dinkey Lakes Wilderness was also created, while additions to both the John Muir and Monarch Wilderness areas were also effected. After 20 years the wilderness allocations had been resolved; of the Sierra's 1.39 million acres, 528,000 acres were designated wilderness.

But the resolution of the wilderness controversy did little to help move the stalled land management planning process forward. For the Sierra, which had just completed its final plan, the additional wilderness went to the heart of the plan's land allocations. Planner John Kruse recalled that Supervisor Stauber and members of the planning team decided to poll those public members who had participated in the planning effort and ask them if the plan should be distributed in light of the new wilderness figures. A letter was sent out detailing the problem. Most of those responding felt the plan should be released with a cover letter explaining the wilderness allocation. "We discussed it with the Washington and Regional office, and it was finally decided that because of the changes in the land base, as well at other items that affected the planning process, that we would start all over again," Stauber related. As a result, the 1,500 newly printed plans were relegated to the scrapheap of government planning.[7]

At that moment public frustration with the plan boiled over. Critics charged that the process was too complex, too expensive or too impractical. In an editorial The Fresno Bee took a swipe at former Senator and Vice President Hubert Humphrey, the main force behind the mandated plans. "Hubert, what have you wrought?" asked The Bee. The article noted that the planning process was extremely complicated. It included forestry policy issues, developing criteria for judging them, inventorying forest resources, formulating alternatives for forest uses, and selecting the alternatives to be followed by monitoring to see how the plans have worked. "Humphrey's aim was to provide a process for settling conflicts and, as he said, 'get the Forest Service out of the courts and back into the woods.' He succeeded very imperfectly."[8]

Steve Beck, a Sierra veteran, pointed out some of the problems. As a staff member who had once been involved in the planning effort, he recalled that almost every time the staff met to discuss the plan there were some new guidelines or directives. "Despite more than 20 years with the Forest Service, I have found it very demanding to

The historic Jesse Ross cabin was relocated from the Hogue Ranch to the Clearwater Station in 1991, when it was restored as a special centennial project.



In 1985, then-Senator Pete Wilson spoke at the dedication of the new and enlarged wilderness areas on the Sierra at a ceremony held at the Mile High Vista.

absorb all the information in the planning document, analyze it, consider the opinions of widely differing groups, and formulate my personal response. I have found myself wondering if it would not be an easier task if I knew less about the management of natural resources and the Sierra Forest in particular." Beck also spoke to the complexity and expense of the planning process. Like many others he thought a more regional approach would have been more effective, rather than developing 123 individual plans nationwide.[9]

Some other Sierra veterans were even less kind. Phil Winkle, who had served in a variety of posts during his 18 years on the forest, including planning, said the process was designed to fail. "It grew beyond comprehension; every staff member wanted to include their pet project. They kept expanding the planning process. . . and it became the Forest Service's Vietnam." [10]

Years later, Stauber also acknowledged that he was troubled by the designation of the Dinkey Creek Wilderness because it prevented the Forest Service from applying more flexible management options to the area, rather than the restrictions imposed by the wilderness designation, which would restrict groups, such as the Boy Scouts or other large organizations.

Stauber's Supervisor stay came to an end in December 1984 when he moved on to the San Bernardino National Forest. His replacement, James Boynton, was a California native and a graduate of Utah State University who had begun his Forest Service career in 1967 on the Dixie National Forest. Little could he have anticipated the events that would line his path and add another page to the history of the Sierra.

As the forest moved into its ninth decade, and as the various supervisors, district rangers and other employees moved on, a score of long-time employees continued to serve the Sierra, quietly and dependably. One of the least visible but most consistent was Lena Nakamura, long-time administrative secretary for four Forest Supervisors, ranging from Walter Puhn to James Boynton. Over the years, Nakamura provided the continuity and institutional memory that would allow the Sierra to make the transitions during a period of increasing turmoil over the administrations of the national forests. "Lena was the glue that held the forest together during those periods of change. She was a

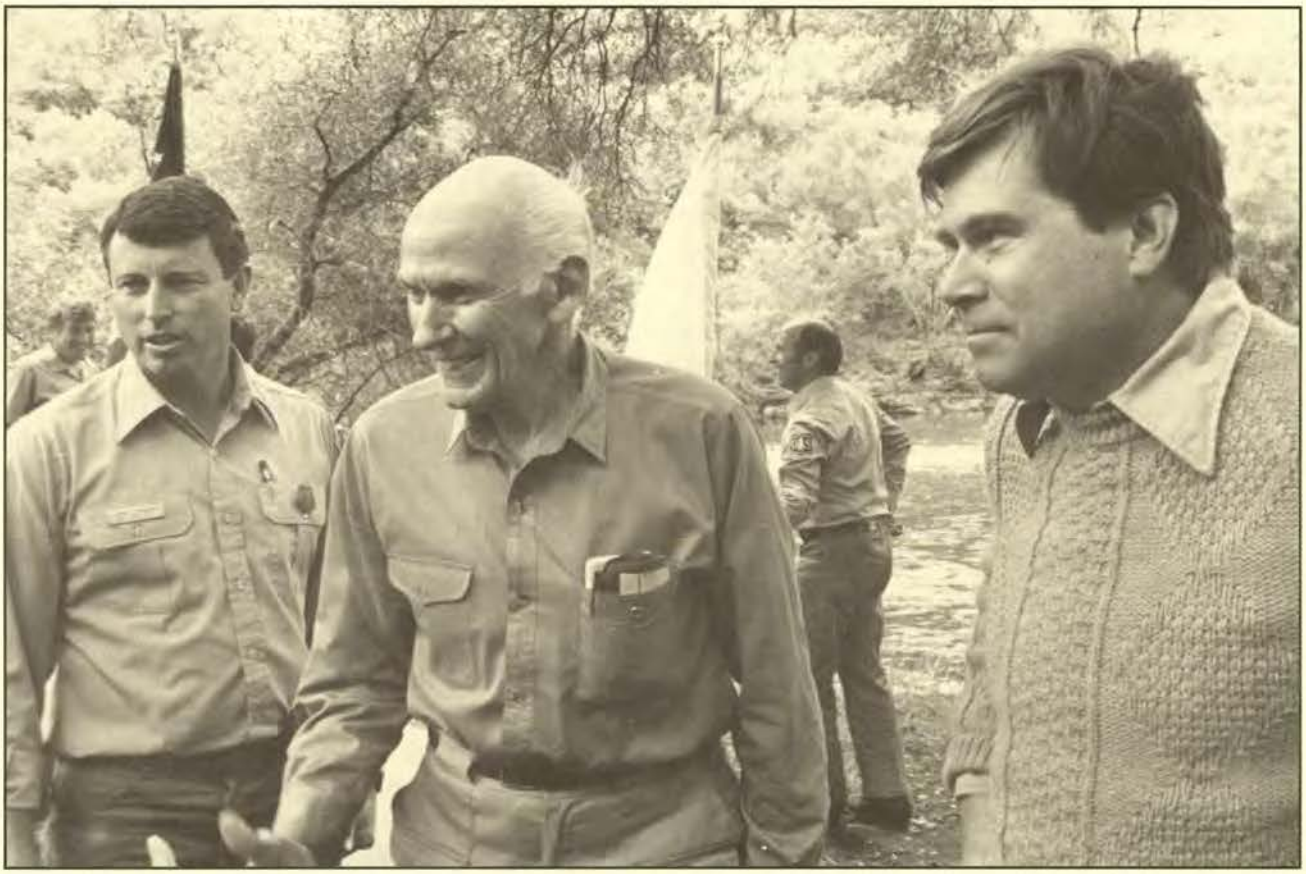
tremendous individual - a dedicated secretary," observed Dorothy Hagopian, another long-time Sierra veteran.[11]

When the 16,000 acre Powerhouse Fire broke out near Auberry in June 1989, the fire sparked concern within the Forest Service over its ability to provide fire protection to the fast growing rural areas on the western boundary of the forest. The heat and smoke also underscored some of the political heat and smoke swirling over the controversial, emotional charged 1980s. Another of the highly charged issues centered around the long-time efforts by the Kings River Conservation District to build a large water storage project in the upper Kings River above Pine Flat Reservoir. The proposed Rodgers Crossing Dam had been on the drawing board since 1963. As opposition to another dam arose, the Committee to Save the Kings River managed to obtain a state moratorium on the project, temporarily stalling the it. However, in 1984, Congressman Pashayan had managed to exclude the upper Kings River from the California Wilderness Act, giving the envisioned dam a new lease on life. Moving swiftly to block any dam, Representative Rick Lehman D-Sanger drafted legislation that would establish a 49,000 acre special management area, covering lands in both Sierra and Sequoia National Forests precluding any dam. With the help of Senator Alan Cranston the measure made its way through Congress in 1987.

In 1989, the supervisor's office underwent another relocation effort after the federal courts decided they needed additional space in the B.F. Sisk Federal Building in downtown Fresno. After 22 years at 1130 O Street - and after three prior moves around Fresno, the "SO" was slated to move to Clovis. With echoes of the 1952 North Fork relocation bouncing off the wall, a wail of complaints rose up from the Fresno City Council. For years the city had encouraged urban sprawl but now it found itself the apparent victim. The council beseeched the Forest Service to find another downtown location, or, at least, to find some other location within the city limits. Representative Rick Lehman was pressed into the resistance movement. But even the Congressman could not stem the forces of government. In 1990, amid the din and confusion of its ninth move in just over 90 years, the Sierra Forest picked up the supervisor's office and moved about 10 miles closer to the forest, at 1600 Tollhouse Road.

There were other proposed moves that did

Sierra timber operators experimented with a high flotation skedder, seeking ways to reduce soil disturbance from logging.



Supervisor James Boynton, Senator Alan Cranston and Representative Rick Lehman huddle during the 1987 dedication of the 49,000 Kings River Special Management Area.

not occur, however. As the service explored ways to reduce the high costs of leased buildings, one plan looked at combining the Kings River and Pineridge districts into one joint office at the bottom of the four lane on Highway 186 near Lodge Road. Under a three way agreement, the Forest Service would receive a 25-acre administrative site and office building; Southern California Edison Company would get title to 680 of encumbered National Forest land northeast of Shaver Lake; and Sequoia Forest Industries, would obtain timber to the value of the land and building. The proposal was supported by Congressmen Pashayan, Lehman and Tony Coelho. However the House Agriculture Committee took a dim view of the exchange and the project was halted, even though SFI had already purchased the proposed building site.

By that time, Sierra was beginning to face many of the same problems dogging some of the other national forests, including the use of herbicides. Prior to 1984, the Sierra had used herbicides to control competing vegetation in reforested areas. However, in 1984, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals in Oregon ruled that environmental documents were inadequate because they did not cover the worst case scenario about the safety of herbicides. Soon after the judge's ruling, the Chief of the Forest Service imposed a moratorium on the use of certain herbicides. This moratorium essentially banned the use of herbicides on the forest within California. At that juncture, the required environmental studies were begun, covering the effect of herbicide on people, water and soil, wildlife and the environment.

Five years later, Regional Forester Paul Barker authorized the use of herbicides. But it would not be "business as usual." Herbicides on the forest would be used only as a last option; use of some chemicals would be restricted or prohibited; and workers applying herbicides would have to adhere to tougher applications rules. Nevertheless, the use of herbicides to control competing vegetation on reforested sites continues to be an emotionally charged issue with environmental

groups and native American Indians.

Another controversy emerged with the Endangered Species Act. While the act had been passed in 1973, few of the federal land agencies had recognized its potential impacts or consequences. For the Forest Service, with a forest full of flora and fauna, the act gradually took on mind-boggling dimensions - led by the spotted owl. Although not listed as threatened or endangered, the spotted owl had been designated as an "sensitive species" and a measure of the health of the forest. The designation fueled a larger debate centered around old growth forest and ecosystem management.

In the fall of 1990, a former Fresnan walked out onto the forest near Glen Meadow with Supervisor Boynton and several members of his staff. Dr. Hal Salwasser had come to look at the Sierra and offer his perspective on forest management. A wildlife biologist with nearly 20 years of experience in resources management, Salwasser advocated a broader forest management philosophy, something known as "New Perspectives." His approach went beyond the argument over ancient forests and spotted owls. New Perspectives looked at continued health of all forest species and systems. For many veteran employees of the Forest Service, Salwasser's approach represented "one of the greatest challenges ever posed in managing the nation's forest." [12]

Across the country other experts were also looking at the health of both the national and private forests. Some were advocating a slightly different approach known as "New Forestry." In the Pacific Northwest, the court orders had cut-off much of the timber harvesting until the debate over the northern spotted owl could be resolved. On the Sierra, Boynton faced a similar problem with the timber harvest - one that had been compounded by drought and the staggering volume of bug-killed trees. He acknowledged that the Sierra National Forest could produce a timber harvest of 190 million board feet a year. But that would mean clear-

Fire of unknown origin destroyed the Minarets District Ranger Office - the historic North Fork Supervisor Office - in March 1992.

The Trees - and The Forest

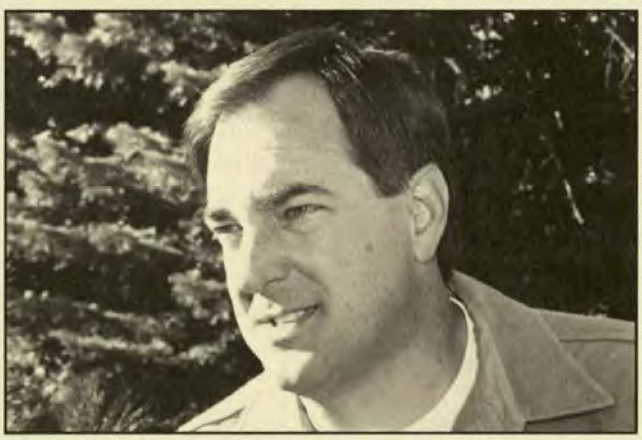
A Sierra Perspective

When Hal Salwasser stepped out to make a day tour of the Sierra National Forest in the fall of 1989 it was something akin to a trip down memory lane. The prodigal son had come back to his "hometown forest."

A native of Fresno, Salwasser had attended the local schools and then graduated from Fresno State University with a degree in biology. As a college student he had managed to get a summer job working with the Kings River deer herd for the California Department of Fish and Game. He went on to obtain a doctorate at the University of Califo rnia at Berkeley in wildlife biology and, eventually, a permanent job with the Forest Service.

As he made his way up the career ladder, Salwasser began taking a closer look at the ongoing, century-long experiment in resource management - also known as the Forest Service. The thrust of that initial approach had been aimed at meeting the commodity needs of a growing nation, that is, providing increasing amounts of timber, forage and water. But what about all the other creatures and uses of the forest, he asked

Something was missing from the grand experiment. Some of the elements were lacking. And the equations kept on changing, reflecting population growth and ever-increasing uses of the national forest. Not only was the process flawed, it was in danger of collapsing. A new approach was needed.



Salwasser stepped back and began looking at the bigger picture. He felt that the key to forest management rested in the continued health of all forest species and systems - from the smallest field mouse to the giant sequoias. Over time his own theory emerged, one that recognized the need to balance commodity production and uses of the forest with the finite nature of the forest itself.

In 1988, his pioneering efforts came to the attention of Chief Forester Dale Robertson, and Salwasser was selected to help the service chart a new direction or course. In short order, Salwasser and something known as "New Perspectives" arrived on the forest scene. Unfortunately the bureaucracy had a hard time accepting or defining the label. A better buzzword was needed. New Forestry was bantered about for a while until it got lost in the woods.

Out of the verbiage of New Perspectives and New Forestry emerged "Ecosystem Management" - aimed at ecologically sustainable forestry. At that juncture, after nearly one hundred years of pioneering, the Forest Service could now see the forest for the trees. A new age of forest management had emerged. All that was needed was the institutional resolve and the Congressional will to put his policy into practice.

In 1992, Salwasser took a two year leave of absence to teach - and preach - ecosystem management at the School of Forestry, the University of Montana - while still cherishing his Sierra roots.

cutting; a more accelerated cutting cycle or re-entry into logged over areas; and the use of herbicides in controlling brush in reforested areas. Such practices could cause erosion and adversely affect water quality and wildlife habitat.[13]

After 40 years of accelerated cutting Boynton could see something had to give. The Sierra and the other national forests were on a collision course with reality, which would require that the timber harvest be reduced. He attributed the reductions to providing habitat for spotted owls and small furbearing animals, as well as protecting rivers from silt and restoring the number of snags or standing trees for nesting wildlife.

Then in February, 1992, the Sierra unveiled a draft summary of the long-delayed land management plan. After months of analyzing the details, Boynton recommended a 35 percent reduction in the timber harvest. From an average of 125 million board feet during the past decade, the harvest would be reduced to 88 million board feet. The timber industry, quick to respond, said any further reductions in the harvest would cause the loss of jobs across the larger woods industry. Industry people projected that one of the five sawmills in the six county area would be forced to close if the reduced harvest was implemented.

When Salwasser paid a return visit to Fresno a few months later and talked to the Society of American Foresters, he spoke to the increasing difficulty of managing the national forests. "The ultimate challenge may not be what we think they are: old growth, jobs, spotted owls, roadless areas and endangered species of even bio-diversity. These are important issues that we must address. They are symptoms of the real challenges: human population growth, consumption and pollution."[14]

Editor's postscript:

As we conclude this celebration of the Sierra'a 100th birthday, we can observe that social and environmental values are once again shifting. It was just a hundred years ago that the Sierra Forest Reserve came onto the scene. In its struggle to become a functional organization, the reserve underwent massive change -one that was often defined by the commitment and dedication of those founding pioneers to commit themselves in the face of adversity.

Today, as the Sierra National Forest enters its second century, it will face new challenges and controversy, and, yes, new difficulties. The shortcomings of natural resource management in today's climate - as well as in the future - will continue. The prospect of massive staff reductions poses still more concerns. But if the Sierra is to survive - and thrive - during its second hundred years, it will need people with the same sense of service and dedication as its founding force.

Tomorrow's Sierran will need to discover their heritage and their history - recognizing and treasuring the past so they can face the future. To do so they will need to redefine dedication and stewardship. They will need to know the devotion of Julia Shinn; the determination of M.A. "Ben" Benedict; along with the service of Walter Puhn. They will need to appreciate the courage of Gene Tully, the spirit of Annie Keller, and the loyalty of Lena Nakamura - along with the stewardship and service of those who once formed the tight-knit Sierra family.

They will need to look beyond wage-and-hour act, beyond the consent decree, the office politics and all the other barriers to face the increasing difficulties surrounding forest management. As much as anything, they will need to rededicate themselves to ideals which have made the Sierra one of the pioneer forests of this country. To do so, they must rediscover their own roots.

Major Growthrings on the Sierra National Forest

1893 Sierra Forest Reserve created by President Benjamin Harrison with a total of 4,057470 acres under the Department of the Interior. B.F. Allen named first superintendent.

1897 Sheepmen fight efforts to control grazing and seek repeal of reserves nation-wide. Organic Act defines mission of the reserves.

1898 Sierra reserve hires first 60 rangers; north and south divisions proposed. Gifford Pinchot named chief of United States Division of Forestry.

1903 President Theodore Roosevelt visits Chiquito Basin and Globe Rock.

1905 Reserve increased to 5,049934 acres, accompanied by the transfer to the U.S. Department of Agriculture; Charles A. Shinn appointed Sierra Forest North supervisor; Fresno office abolished.

1906 First ranger "convention" or training session at North Fork.

1907 Forest Reserves renamed national forests, such as the Sierra National Forest. Pinchot tours Stevenson Creek timber sale.

1908 Acreage increased to 6,660,166 acres. The Sierra forest separated into the Sequoia, Stanislaus, Mono and Inyo national forests, leaving the Sierra with 1,935,680 acres. Congress mandates 25 percent of forest receipts returned to affected counties.

1909 Fire lookout established on Shuteye Mountain - after two fire seasons of daily hikes to the summit.

1910 Construction of Big Creek hydroelectric project, the largest in the world, gets underway on Sierra National Forest.

1911 Bridge headquarters established on North Fork compound. Paul G. Redington replaces Shinn as Forest Supervisor. U.S. Supreme Court overturns Pierre Grimaud case on Sierra South National Forest, allowing Forest Service to regulate grazing and other uses on national forests.

1913 Huntington Lake completed.

1916 Sierra goes on war footing, supplying needs for World War I; Maurice A. "Ben" Benedict becomes Forest Supervisor - a post he will hold for 28 years as Sierra's longest tenured Supervisor. High Sierra District established.

1920 Forest Service and U.S. Army Corps begin overflights inspection of Sierra National Forest using World War I aircraft; Federal Power Commission formed to administer power applications on federal lands. Sierra Club outing tours Sierra forest.

1922 Sierra forest begins issuing 10-year grazing permits.

1928 Camp Fresno established on Dinkey Creek under special use permit.

1931 Tollhouse fire ravages forest.

1933 Civilian Conservation Corps establishes work camps on the Sierra National Forest; launches massive building program of campgrounds, trails, fire lookouts and fire roads and other facilities.

1937 Bretz Mill fires. Dinkey Creek Road completed.

1939 Source Point Fire; Fresno Ski Club begins using Mt. Raymond Winter Sports Area.

1940 About 750,000 acres of High Sierra Primitive Area transferred to Kings Canyon National Park. Other transfer to Yosemite National Park reduce Sierra to 1.49 million acres. Chinese Peak proposed as downhill ski area by Fresno skiers and Forest Service.

1942 World War II brings dramatic changes to the Sierra and other national forests. Tungsten mines developed.

1944 Kermit W. Linstedt named forest supervisor; makes major reduction in grazing allotments.

1948 Byron B. Beattie becomes forest supervisor. Timber production soars.

1952 Supervisor's office moved from North Fork to Fresno — amid some resistance from staff and community members.

1954 Leon R. Thomas becomes forest supervisor. Pine Flat and Edison dams completed.

1957 Walter Puhn begins as supervisor - to become second longest tenured Sierra supervisor.

1958 China Peak Ski Area developed by Knute Flint under Forest Service permit. Bass Lake Ranger District formed out of North Fork District and Mariposa District.

1961 Harlow Fire devastates Ahwahnee and some adjacent forest lands. Congress authorizes Multiple Use-Sustained Yield Act, mandating equal consideration to outdoor recreation, range, timber, water and fish and wildlife.

1962 Sierra forest begins wilderness planning effort. Four fire fighters killed near Midpines. First "helitack" fire suppression unit formed on Sierra National Forest.

1964 Wilderness Act passes, calling for program of wilderness designations; John Muir Wilderness replaces Mount Dana-Minaret Wild Area. The Land and Water conservation Fund passed to provide for park, forest and recreation facilities. Tehipite Valley transferred to Kings Canyon National Park.

1968 High Sierra District incorporated into Pineridge District. North Fork Ranger District combined with Minarets District.

1969 Zane C. Smith Jr. moves into Forest Supervisors post. Wild and Scenic River Act authorized.

1970 National Environmental Policy Act approved, requiring environmental review of all significant projects on federal lands. Sotero Muniz becomes Forest Supervisor.

1971 Sierra Forest leads effort to relieve rural counties for cost of search and rescues on national forests.

1974 Work begins on Pacific Gas & Electric Co.'s huge Helms Creek hydroelectric project. Kaiser Wilderness established. Resources planning act passes.

1976 National Forest Management Act approved. Sierra designated lead forest to begin comprehensive land management plan.

1978 Richard L. Stauber named supervisor. Pacific Gas & Electric Company's Helms project gets underway.

1984 Courtright Intrusive Zone designated special "Geologic Area." California Wilderness Act passed.

1985 James Boynton becomes Forest Supervisor.

1987 Kings River Special Management Area established.

1989 Supervisor's Office relocated to Clovis.

1992 Historic North Fork office burns. Sierra Land Management Plan and accompanying enviromnmental documents completed, with record of decision following in 1993.

1993 Sierra forest marks its hundredth birthday.

Sierra National Forest Placenames

What's in a name? Within the Sierra National Forest there are hundreds of placenames reflecting some of the forest's rich and colorful past. Only a handful of the orignial Native American names have been preserved. Several sites, including Mount Pinchot and Forester's Pass are no longer within the forest boundary. Some of the significant names include:

Arnold Meadow - As with dozens of other mountain meadows this one was named after pioneer stockman Ben Arnold.
Mount Abbot - Named by the California Geological Survey for Henry Laracom Abbot, military man known for his reports on the Mississippi River and western America.
Balloon Dome - Named by the survey in 1864 for the "gigantic balloon struggling to get up through the rock" in the San Joaquin River Canyon.
Bear Creek - Applied by the early sheepmen who were harassed by bears in the area, acccording to explorer Thodore S. Solomons.
Beasore Meadows, Creek - Named for pioneer stockman Tom Beausore.
Big Creek - Formerly named Manzanita Park until the Big Creek hydro-electric project came along in the early 1900s.
Boneyard Meadow - Marks the remains of a flock of nearly 2,000 sheep who died after they were caught in an early storm.
Cascade Valley - Originally known as Peninsula Meadow until it was changed by George R. Davis of the U.S. Geological Survey in the early 1900s.
Cassidy Meadow - Another early sheepman.
Cora Lakes - For Cora Cressey Crow by R. B. Marshall of the USGS.
Devils Bathtub - Also named by Davis of the USGS.
Dinkey Creek - For a small dog that lost an argument with a grizzly bear at that location in 1863.
Dusy Meadow/Basin - For pioneer sheepman turned mountaineer Frank Dusy of Selma, the first white man to visit Tehipite Valley.
Evolution Creek/Basin - That area now in Kings Canyon National Park; named after the great evolutionists, Darwin, Wallace, Huxley, Haeckel, Spencer and Fiske by Theodore S. Solomons.
Eastwood Visitor Center - For John S. Eastwood whose engineering genius gave rise to the Big Creek project.
Lake Thomas A. Edison - After the famed electrical inventor.
Ellis Meadow - After pioneer stockman Benjamin Franklin Ellis.
Exchequer Heights - For the old Exchequer Mining Co. of the late 1800s.
Fernandez Pass - Named after Joseph Fernandez, a sergeant with the U.S. Cavalry that patrolled the Yosemite boundary in the late 1890s.
Fish Creek Valley - Named by the early herders for the abundance of trout in the back country creek.

Florence Lake - For Florence Starr, sister of Sierra Club pioneer Walter Starr, who camped there in 1896.
Fuller Meadow - Previously named Frenchman's Flat then renamed for miner Frank Fuller who homesteaded there with his family.
Mount Gabb - for William M. Gabb, a member of the state geological survey, who visited the surrounding area in 1864.
Goodale Pass - Apparently for Gus G. Goodale, son of one-time Ranger Thomas J. Goodale of the Forest Service.
Graveyard Meadows - Apparently for the herders who were victims of the early range wars within the Mono Creek drainage.
Helm Creek/Meadow - After William Helm, one of the earliest Fresno County sheepmen.
Huntington Lake - for Henry Huntington, the "capitalist" behind the Big Creek hydroelectric project.
Hell-For-Sure Pass/Lake - For the old sheep trail marking the divide between the San Joaquin and Kings river drainages.
Mount Hilgard - After Eugene Woldemar Hilgard, tree expert and professor of agriculture at the University of California from 1875 - 1916.
Hoffman Meadow - Milton Hoffman who ran sheep near Mount Tom for many years.
Hutchinson Meadow - In honor of James Sather Hutchinson of San Francisco, early mountain climber and Sierra Club leader.
Isberg Pass/Peak - For an early cavalry member who helped discover the pass between Yosemite and the forest reserve.
John Muir Trail - After writer and naturalist John Muir, Califoria's most venerated citizen.
Kaiser Pass/Wilderness - Apparently for an early miner who prospected in an an area around Kaiser Gulch during the Civil War.
Kings River - Spanish for El Rio de los Santos Reyes by Spanish explorer Gabriel Morago, who also named the San Joaquin and Merced rivers.
Kinsman Flat - For prospector and pioneer settler Joe Kinsman who settled there in the 1870.
Lake of the Lone Indian - For the apparent profile of an Indian face.
Madera Peak - Spanish for wood or timber; first applied to the city and then to the county in the late 1800s by an early lumber company.
Maxon Meadow - After Charles Maxon, owner of Cresent Ranch at Timmer now covered by Pine Flat dam.
McClure Lake - For a cavalary officer who mapped much of the area around Yosemite in the late 1800s.
McKinley Grove - R. B. Marshall of the USGS named the sequoia grove for President William McKinley, who was assassinated in 1901.
Mono Creek\Pass - After the native American Indians who migrated along the corridor for hundreds of years.
Musick Peak\Creek - For early lumbermen Henry or Charles Musick who were associated with the Fresno Flume and Irrigation Co.
Nelder Grove - Marks a sequoia grove where prospector John Nelder of New Orleans settled in the 1870s.
Ockenden - After pioneer businessman and stockman Tom Ockenden who established a resort in the late 1800s near Shaver Lake.
Pineridge - Also Pine Ridge for the timber land below Shaver Lake, known by the first pioneers as the "Pinery."

Piute Creek\Pass - After the Indians who used the pass to reach their summer encampment site at Mono Hot Springs and Blayney Meadows.
Post Corral - Another early stockman's corral - similar to the standing post of nearby Burnt Corral.
Redinger Reservoir - For David Redinger, veteran engineer for the Big Creek project.
Ross Crossing - A river ford on lower Dinkey Creek that was named for an early stockman who apparently drowned there.
Sample Meadow - After Jack Sample early Fresno County sheepman and then cattleman.
Selden Pass - Named for Selden S. Hooper, a member of the USGS whose surname was also applied to the nearby Mount Hooper.
Mount Senger - Honors Joachim H. Senger, early University of California professor and one of the four founders of the Sierra Club.
Shaver Lake - For C.B. Shaver, president of the 1893 Fresno Flume and Irrigation Co.
Shuteye Peak - Named for Old Shuteye, a Sierra Indian who lived alongside one of the main migration trails and who was blind in one eye.
Snow Slide Creek - As a result of the disastrous 1927 avalanche that claimed a dozen lives near Big Creek.
Mount Shinn - After Charles Shinn, first supervisor of the Sierra National Forest.
Tehipte Dome - One of the few Indians names that have been retained.
Tully Hole - For Gene Tully, one of the early rangers on the forest reserve, who pastured his animals there.
Wishon Reservoir - For A.G. Wishon, hydroelectric pioneer, with San Joaquin Light and Power and then Pacific Gas and Electric.

Suggested Reading

Bernard Eduard Fernow - A Story of North American Forestry by Andrew Denny Rodgers III; Forest History Society, Durham, N.C. 1991.
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